

It does not have to be that way. We can pass these pay-for amendments. I have my own amendments, as I said. Others have also proposed their amendments. I know Senator AYOTTE has an amendment I am supporting that, again, gets at fraud and abuse in government programs and says: Let's pay for the unemployment benefits.

She also, by the way, pays for veterans' benefits that were cut during the budget agreement we just passed. I also support that. She has a little left over for actual deficit reduction.

Senator COBURN is going to have a proposal out here. I think Senator HATCH will have one. Senator MCCONNELL will have one. My understanding is that Senator COBURN has one that is also out of the President's budget.

There are plenty of ideas here as to how to pay for this extension, short term, while we look at better ways to have the unemployment insurance system work, to connect people who are unemployed to the jobs that are out there, by giving them the skills they need. That is where the hard work begins.

We have got to get this country moving again. We have got to do things to actually increase economic growth and give people the skills they need to access the jobs that are out there. We need to pass bills such as the CAREER Act, bipartisan legislation I have introduced with Senator MIKE BENNET from Colorado.

In Ohio, we have about 400,000 people unemployed. We are told there are about 100,000 jobs right now open in Ohio. A lot of these jobs are high-tech jobs. Some are in advanced manufacturing, some are in bioscience, some in information technology. We need to be sure that the people who are unemployed get the skills they need to be able to take advantage of those jobs, those opportunities.

We can also start by working on tax reform. Everybody seems to talk about it. Let's do it. Corporate tax reform alone would result in a lot more revenue coming into the Federal Government by repatriating profits. It would help expand opportunities, not for the boardroom, for the people who work in those companies.

People who have looked at this at the Congressional Budget Office, the economic experts, have said: If we did corporate business tax reform, over 70 percent of the benefit goes right to the workers: higher pay, higher benefits. It is time to ensure that we have a growing economy, we are growing that pie, not just carving it up.

Let's streamline the regulations in this country. Currently the United States ranks 34th in the world in the time it takes to get a government green light to actually build something. Think about that. This is a key World Bank measure for ease of doing business. We want America to be at the top of that list, not halfway down that list. Unless we do that, we are not going to see the kind of investment we

want in this country. How many jobs are lost every year because people cannot get a permit, that a good idea cannot be built? These are jobs that are there if we change the policies here in Washington, DC.

Congress continues to pat itself on the back for scoring political points rather than taking on these challenges that face our country. I can tell you who is not patting us on the back: It is the American people. They are not happy. They are not pleased with our progress. There is good reason. They are actually seeing their take-home pay go down as the deficit goes up, in, as the President talked about, a better economy.

Fifty years ago the United States declared a war on poverty. Yet poverty is still a major problem. The goal was noble, but the tools we used were not up to the challenge.

Since the recession began, 9 million more Americans have fallen into poverty and the median household income is down more than 8 percent. Poverty rates have actually increased during this administration with the policies we have.

It is time for a change. For decades we have exported to the nations around the world these principles that have allowed us to enjoy so much prosperity and success. We have said: Follow the American way; the free enterprise system works. We have preached to them this gospel, as well as our belief that by removing the shackles of government interference from the market—whether in the form of overregulation, overspending, or overtaxing—everyone can prosper.

As U.S. Trade Representative I had the opportunity to travel all around the world representing our great country. It was a great honor to tell people the benefits of liberalizing trade, knocking down barriers to increase economic growth and opportunity. It works. Entrepreneurs and job creators have lifted more people out of poverty around the world over the past few decades than any government program ever could because the free enterprise system does work. We need to get back to that.

Let's do something we can be proud of in this Chamber today. Let's empower the American people instead of the American Government. Let's not kick the can of spending down the road any longer. Let's take some votes. Not all of them are going to be easy votes, and they shouldn't be. After all, that is what we are elected to do—take tough votes. These votes we take today, though, can make a real difference in people's lives.

Let's start today. Let's pay for this legislation. Let's use these pay-fors we just talked about that are bipartisan, that are sensible, that can be supported on both sides of the aisle and in both bodies. Let's ensure that we put in place the progrowth policies so that we aren't just giving people a little more unemployment insurance for a few

more months but giving them the opportunity to get a job and the dignity and self-respect that come with that.

I urge my colleagues to support my amendment, pay for this legislation, put politics aside, and get to work for the American people.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). The Republican leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, over the past several years those of us who are fortunate enough to serve have engaged in many fierce debates. Some have been forced upon us by external events, including a searing financial crisis, while others were brought about by an unapologetically liberal President who promised dramatic change and who has worked very hard to follow through on that pledge—in some cases, even in the face of legal obstacles and widespread public opposition. So change has, indeed, come.

Despite the daily drumbeat of headlines about gridlock and dysfunction in Washington, the truth is that an activist President and a Democratic-controlled Senate have managed to check off an awful lot of items on their wish list one way or another. Yet just as important as what they did, my colleagues, is how they did it because that also has been at the heart of so many of the fights we have had around here over the past few years. These conflicts haven't stemmed from personal grievances or contempt, as some would have it. They are, instead, the inevitable consequence of an administration that was in such a hurry to impose its agenda that it neglected to persuade the public of its wisdom and then cast aside one of the greatest tools we have in this country for guaranteeing a durable and stable legislative consensus, and that tool is the Senate.

Remember, I think we all know partisanship is not some recent invention. American politics has always been divided between two ideological camps. Today that is reflected in the two major parties, but it has actually always been there. On one side are those who proudly place their trust in government and its agents to guide our institutions and direct our lives. On the other are those of us who put our trust in the wisdom and the creativity of private citizens working voluntarily with each other and through more local mediating institutions, guided by their own sense of what is right, what is fair, and what is good.

Recent polling suggests that most Americans fall squarely into the latter camp. People are generally confident in their local governments but lack confidence in Washington.

Despite the political and ideological divides which have always existed in our country, we have almost always managed to work out our differences—not by humiliating the other side into submission but through simple give-and-take. It is the secret of our success. The same virtues that make any

friendship, marriage, family, or business work are the ones that have always made this country work. And the place where it happens, the place where all the national conflicts and controversies that arise in this big, diverse, wonderful country of ours have always been resolved, is in this Chamber.

I realize it may not be immediately obvious why that is the case, but the fact is that every serious student of this institution, from De Tocqueville to our late colleague Robert Byrd, has seen the Senate as uniquely important to America's stability and to its flourishing. In their view, it has made all the difference, and here is why—because whether it was the fierce early battles over the shape and scope of the Federal Government or those that surrounded industrialization or those that preceded and followed a nation-rendering civil war or those surrounding the great wars of the 20th century or the expansion of the franchise or a decades-long cold war or the war on terror, we have always found a way forward, sometimes haltingly but always steadily, and the Senate is the tool that has enabled us to find our footing almost every time.

I mention all this because as we begin a new year, it is appropriate to step back from all the policy debates that have occupied us over the past few years and focus on another debate we have been having, and the debate we have been having is over the State of this institution. What have we become? It is not a debate that ever caught fire with the public or with the press, but it is a debate that should be of grave importance to all of us because on some level every single one of us has to be at least a little bit uneasy about what happened here last November. But even if you are completely at peace with what happened in November, even if you think it was perfectly fine to violate the all-important rules that say changing the rules requires the assent of two-thirds of Senators duly elected and sworn, none of us should be happy with the trajectory the Senate was on even before that day, even before November, or the condition we find the Senate in 225 years after it was created. I don't think anybody is comfortable with where we are. I know I am not, and I bet, even though there is nobody over here at the moment, I bet almost none of them are either.

I wish to share a few thoughts on what I think we have lost over the last 7 years and what can be done about it together. "Together" obviously requires the involvement, one would think, of some people on the other side of the aisle. Even though they are not here to listen, they have been invited.

Let me state at the outset that it is not my intention to point the finger of blame at anybody, although some of that is inevitable. I don't presume to have all of the answers either, and I am certainly not here to claim that we are without fault. But I am absolutely cer-

tain of one thing: The Senate can be better than it is. Many of us have seen a better Senate than we have now, no matter who was in the majority. This institution can be better than it is. I just can't believe that on some level everyone in this Chamber, including the folks on the other side, doesn't agree. It just can't be the case that we are content with the theatrics and the messaging wars that go on day after day. It can't be the case that Senators who grew up reading about the great statesmen who made their name and their mark over the years are now suddenly content to stand in front of a giant poster board making some poll-tested point-of-the-month day after day and then run back to their respective corners and congratulate each other on how right they are. I can't believe we are all happy about that on either side.

Don't misunderstand me—there is a time for making a political point and even scoring a few points. I know that as well as anybody. But it can't be the only thing we do. Surely we do something other than scoring political points against each other. It cheapens the service we have sworn to provide to our constituents. It cheapens the Senate, which is a lot bigger than any of us.

Hopefully, we can all agree that we have a problem. I realize both sides have their own favorite account of what caused it. We have our talking points, and they have their talking points. We all repeat them with great repetition, and we all congratulate each other for being on the right side of the debate. I understand that. People over there think Republicans abuse the rules, and we think they do. But, as I said, my goal here isn't to make converts on that front; my purpose is to suggest that the Senate can be better than it has been and that it must be if we are to remain great as a nation.

The crucial first step of any vision that gets us there is to recognize that vigorous debate about our differences isn't some sickness to be lamented. Vigorous debate is not a problem. When did that become a problem? It is actually a sign of strength to have vigorous debates.

It is a common refrain among pundits that the fights we have around here are pointless. They are not at all pointless. Every single debate we have around here is about something important. What is unhealthy is when we neglect the means that we have always used to resolve our differences. That is the real threat to this country, not more debate. When did that become a problem?

The best mechanism we have for working through our differences and arriving at a durable consensus is the U.S. Senate. An Executive order can't do it. The fiat of a nine-person court can't do it. A raucous and precarious partisan majority in the House can't do it. The only institution that can make stable and enduring laws is the one we

have in which all 50 States are represented equally and where every single Senator has a say in the laws we pass. This is what the Senate was designed for. It is what the Senate is supposed to be about, and almost—almost—always has been.

Take a look at some of the most far-reaching legislation of the past century. Look at the vote tallies. Medicare and Medicaid were both approved with the support of about half the Members of the minority. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 passed with the votes of 30 out of the 32 Members of the Republican minority—all but two Republican Senators. There weren't many of them. That was the year after the Goldwater debacle. Only two Senators voted against the Social Security Act, and only eight voted against the Americans with Disabilities Act.

None of this happened, by the way—none of it happened—by throwing these bills together in the back room and dropping them on the floor with a stopwatch running. It happened through a laborious process of legislating, persuasion, and coalition building. It took time and it took patience and hard work and it guaranteed that every one of these laws had stability—stability. Compare that—compare that, if you will—to the attitude behind ObamaCare. When Democrats couldn't convince any of us the bill was worth supporting as written, they decided to do it on their own and pass it on a party-line vote and now we are seeing the result.

The chaos this law has visited on our country isn't just deeply tragic; it was, my friends, entirely predictable—entirely predictable. That will always be the case if we approach legislation without regard for the views of the other side. Without some meaningful buy-in, we guarantee a food fight, we guarantee instability, and we guarantee strife.

It may very well have been the case that on ObamaCare the will of the country was not to pass the bill at all. That is what I would have concluded if Republicans couldn't get a single Democratic vote for legislation of that magnitude. I would have thought: Well, maybe this isn't such a great idea. But Democrats plowed forward anyway. They didn't want to hear it. The results are clear. It is a mess, an absolute mess.

The Senate exists to prevent that kind of situation. Because without a moderating institution as the Senate, today's majority passes something and tomorrow's majority repeals it; today's majority proposes something, and tomorrow's majority opposes it. We see that in the House all the time. But when the Senate is allowed to work the way it was designed to, it arrives at a result that is acceptable to people all along the political spectrum. That, my friends, is the whole point.

We have lost our sense for the value of that, and none of us should be at peace. Because if America is to face up

to the challenges we face in the decades ahead, she will need the Senate the Founders, in their wisdom, intended, not the hollow shell of the Senate we have today—not the hollow shell of the Senate we have today.

First, one of the traditional hallmarks of the Senate is a vigorous committee process. It is also one of the main things we have lost. There was a time—not that long ago—when chairmen and ranking members had major influence and used their positions to develop national policy on everything from farm policy to nuclear arms. These men and women enriched the entire Senate through their focus and their expertise. Just as important, they provided an important counterweight to the executive branch. They provided one more check on the White House. If a President thought something was a good idea, he had better make sure he ran it by the committee chairman who had been studying it for the past two decades. If the chairman disagreed, then they would have a serious debate and probably reach a better product as a result.

The Senate should be setting national priorities, not simply waiting on the White House to do it for us. The place to start that process is in the committees. With few exceptions, that is gone. With very few exceptions, that is gone. It is a big loss to the institution, but most importantly it is a big loss for the American people who expect us to lead.

Here is something else we have gained from a robust committee process over the years. Committees have actually served as a school of bipartisanship. If we think about it, it just makes sense. By the time a bill gets through committee, one would expect it to come out in a form that was generally broadly acceptable to both sides; nobody got everything, but more often than not everybody got something, and the product was stable because there was buy-in and a sense of ownership on both sides.

On the rare occasions when that has happened recently, we have seen that work. The committee process in the Senate is a shadow of what it used to be, thereby marginalizing, reducing the influence of every single Member of the Senate on both sides of the aisle. Major legislation is now routinely drafted not in committee but in the majority leader's conference room and then dropped on the floor with little or no opportunity for Members to participate in the amendment process, virtually guaranteeing a fight.

There is a lot of empty talk around here about the corrosive influence of partisanship. If we truly want to do something about it, we should support a more robust committee process. That is the best way to end the permanent sort of shirts-against-skins contest the Senate has become. Bills should go through committee. If Republicans are fortunate enough—if Republicans are fortunate enough—to gain the majority next year, that will be done.

Second, bills should come to the floor and be thoroughly debated. We have an example of that going on right now, and that includes a robust amendment process. In my view, there is far too much paranoia about the other side around here. What are we afraid of? Both sides have taken liberties and abused privileges. I will admit that. But the answer isn't to provoke even more. The answer is to let folks debate. This is the Senate. Let folks debate. Let the Senate work its will, and that means bringing bills to the floor. It means having a free and open amendment process. That is legislating.

That is what we used to do. That is exactly the way this place operated just a few years ago. The senior Senator from Illinois, the Democratic assistant majority leader, likes to say—or at least used to say—that if you don't want to fight fires, don't become a fireman, and if you don't want to cast tough votes, don't come to the Senate. I guess he hasn't said that lately.

When we used to be in the majority, I remember telling people: Look. The good news is we are in the majority. The bad news is, in order to get the bill across the floor, you have to cast a lot of votes you don't want to take—and we did it and people groaned about it, complained about it. Yet the Sun still came up the next day and everybody felt as though they were a part of the process.

Senator DURBIN was right about that when he said it. I think it is time to allow Senators on both sides to more fully participate in the legislative process, and that means having a more open amendment process around here. As I said, obviously it requires us, from time to time, to cast votes we would rather not cast. But we are all grownups. We can take that. There is rarely ever a vote we cast around here that is fatal.

The irony of it all is that kind of process makes the place a lot less contentious. In fact, it is a lot less contentious when we vote on tough issues than when we don't, because when we are not allowed to do that, everybody is angry about being denied the opportunity to do what they were sent here to do, which is to represent the people who elected us and offer ideas we think are worth considering.

At a meeting we just came out of, Senator CORNYN was pointing out there were 13 amendments people on this side of the aisle would like to offer on this bill, all of them related to the subject and important to each Senator who seriously felt there was a better way to improve the bill that is on the floor right now. But, alas, I expect that opportunity will not be allowed because one person who is allowed to get prior recognition can prevent us from getting any amendments or, even worse still, pick our amendments for us, decide which of our amendments are OK and which aren't.

I remember the late Ted Stevens telling the story about when he first got

here. Senator Mansfield was still the majority leader, and he tried to offer an amendment—Senator Stevens did—and the Member of the majority who was managing the bill prevented it, in effect. Senator Mansfield came over to Senator Stevens, took his amendment, went back to his desk and sent it to the floor for him. He sent it to the floor for him. That was the Senate not too long ago.

If someone isn't allowed to get a vote on something they believe in, of course they are going to retaliate. Of course they are going to retaliate. But if they get a vote every once in a while, they do not feel the need to. Voting on amendments is good for the Senate and it is good for the country. Our constituents should have a greater voice in the process.

Since July of last year, there have been four Republican rollcall votes. In the whole second half of 2013, Members on this side of the aisle have gotten four rollcall votes—stunning. That is today's Senate.

So let me say this: If Republicans are fortunate enough to be in the majority next year, amendments will be allowed, Senators will be respected, and we will not make an attempt to wring controversy out of an institution which expects, demands, and approves of great debates about the problems confronting the country.

A common refrain from Democrats is that Republicans have been too quick to block bills from ever coming to the floor. What they fail to mention of course is that often we have done this either because we have been shut out of the drafting process—in other words, had nothing to do with writing the bill in the first place—or it had been made pretty clear that there wouldn't be any amendments, which is, in all likelihood, the situation we are in this very day.

In other words, we already knew the legislation was shaping up to be a purely partisan exercise in which people we represent wouldn't have any meaningful input at all. Why would we want to participate in that? Is it good for our constituents? Does it lead to a better product? Of course not. All it leads to is a lot more acrimony.

So look. I get it. If Republicans had just won the White House and the House and had a 60-vote majority in the Senate, we would be tempted to empty our outbox too. But you can't spend 2 years emptying your outbox and then complain about the backlash. If you want fewer fights, give the other side a say.

That brings me to one of the biggest things we have lost around here, as I see it. The big problem, my colleagues, has never been the rules. Senators from both parties have in the past revered and defended the rules during our Nation's darkest hours. The real problem is an attitude that views the Senate as an assembly line for one party's partisan legislative agenda rather than as a place to build consensus to solve national problems. We have become far

too focused on making a point instead of making a difference, making a point instead of making good stable laws. We have gotten too comfortable with viewing everything we do here through the prism of the next election instead of the prism of duty, and everyone suffers as a result.

As I see it, a major turning point came during the final years of the Bush administration, when the Democratic majority held vote after vote on bills they knew wouldn't pass. I am not saying Republicans have never staged a show vote when we were in the majority. I am not saying I don't even enjoy a good messaging vote from time to time. But we have to wonder, if that is all we are doing, why are we here? It has become entirely too routine, and it diminishes the Senate. I don't care which party you are in; you came here to legitimate, to make a difference for your constituents. Yet over the past several years the Senate seems more like a campaign studio than a serious legislative body.

Both sides have said and done things over the past few years we probably wish we hadn't. But we can improve the way we do business. We can be more constructive. We can work through our differences. We can do things that need to be done. But there will have to be major changes if we are going to get there. The committee process must be restored. We need to have an open amendment process.

Finally, let me suggest that we need to learn how to put in a decent week's work around here. Most Americans don't work 3 days a week. They would be astonished to find out that is about it around here.

How about the power of the clock to force consensus? The only way 100 Senators will be truly able to have their say, the only way we will be able to work through our tensions and disputes is if we are here more. A number of you will remember this: Not too long ago, Thursday night was the main event around here. There is a huge incentive to finish on Thursday night if you want to leave on Friday. It is amazing how it worked.

Even the most eager beaver among us with a long list of amendments which were good for the country—maybe 10 or 12—around noon on Thursday, it would be down to two or one by midnight on Thursday. It was amazing how consent would be reached when fatigue set in. All it took was for the majority leader—who is in charge of the agenda—to say: Look, this is important. There is bipartisan support for this. This came out of committee. We want to have an open amendment process, but we want to finish this week, and we can finish on Thursday afternoon or Thursday night or Friday morning. We almost never get worn out around here.

What happened to the fatigue factor to bring things to a close? Amendments voluntarily go away, but important ones still get offered, and everybody feels like they have a chance to

be involved in the process no matter which side of the aisle they are on. This is obviously particularly effective on bills which come out of committee, with bipartisan support, so there is an interest in actually passing it. We almost never do that anymore—almost never. On those occasions, we worked late, sometimes well into the morning.

I know that sounds kind of quaint for people who haven't been around here very long, but it actually worked. There is nothing wrong with staying up a little later and getting to a conclusion. I can remember the majority leader himself, when he was whip, walking around late at night on Thursdays with his whip card making sure he had enough votes to do whatever he wanted to do.

When you finished one of those debates, whether you ended up voting for the bill or voting against the bill, you didn't have the feeling that, unless you chose to go away with your amendment, you had been denied the opportunity to participate and to be a part of the process and actually make a difference for your constituents.

That is how you reach consensus: By working and talking and cooperating through give-and-take. That is the way everyone's patience is worn down, not just the majority leader's patience. Everyone can agree on a result even if they don't vote for it in the end. Using the clock to force consensus is the greatest proof of that, and if Republicans are in the majority next year, we will use the clock. Everybody gets an opportunity, but we will use the clock, we will work harder, and get results.

Restoring the committee process, allowing Senators to speak through an open amendment process, and extending the workweek are just a few things the Senate could and should do differently. None of it would guarantee an end to partisan rancor. There is nothing wrong with partisan debate. It is good for the country. None of it would cause us to change our principles or our views about what is right and what is wrong with our country.

Partisanship itself is not the problem. The real problem has been a growing lack of confidence in the Senate's ability to mediate the tensions and disputes we have always had around here. There are many reasons some have lost that confidence, and ultimately both parties have to assume some of the blame.

But we can't be content to leave it at that. For the good of the country, we need to work together to restore this institution. America's strength and resilience has always depended on our ability to adapt to the various challenges of our day. Sometimes that has meant changing the rules when both parties think it is warranted. When the majority leader decided a few weeks back to defy bipartisan opposition—there was bipartisan opposition to what happened in November—by changing the rules that govern this

place with a simple majority, he broke something. He broke something.

But our response can't be to just sit back and accept the demise of the Senate. This body has survived mistakes and excesses before. Even after some of its worst periods, it has found a way to spring back and to be the place where even the starkest differences and the fiercest ideological disputes are hashed out by consensus and mutual respect. Indeed, it is during periods of its greatest polarization that the value of the Senate is most clearly seen.

So let me wrap it up this way. We are all familiar with the Lyndon Johnson reign around here. Robert Caro has given us that story in great detail. Some look at LBJ's well-known heavyhandedness as a kind of mastery. Personally, I have always believed the leader who replaced him was a better fit for this place, and evidently so did Johnson's colleagues who elected Mansfield upon Johnson's departure with overwhelming enthusiasm. They had had it up to here with LBJ, and they were excited that he was gone.

In fact, Caro reports that he tried to come to the first lunch after he became Vice President and was going to act as the sort of de facto majority leader even though he was now Vice President. That was, shall I say, unenthusiastically received, and he was almost literally thrown out of the lunch never to return, and Mansfield was, as I said, enthusiastically chosen to replace him.

The chronicles of LBJ's life and legacy usually leave out what I just told you, but by the time he left the Senate, as I indicated, his colleagues had had enough of him, right up to here. They may have bent to his will while he was here, but the moment they had a chance to be delivered from his ironfisted rule, they took it.

With their support, Mike Mansfield would spend the next 16 years restoring the Senate to a place of greater cooperation and freedom. As we look at what the Senate could be—not what it is now, but what it could be—Mansfield's period gives us a clue.

There are many well-known stories about Mansfield's fairness and equanimity as leader. But they all seem to come down to one thing, and that was his unbending belief that every single Senator was equal. That was Mansfield's operating mode: Every single Senator is equal. He acted that way on a daily basis and conducted himself that way on a daily basis: The unbending belief that every Senator should be treated as equal.

So, look. Both sides will have to work to get us back to where we should be. It is not going to happen overnight. We haven't had much practice lately. In fact, we are completely out of practice at doing what I just suggested as the first steps to get us back to normal. But it is a goal I truly believe we can all agree on and agree to strive toward together, and it takes no rules change. This is a behavioral problem.

It doesn't require a rules change. We just need to act differently with each other, respect the committee process, have an open amendment process, and work a little harder. None of that requires a rules change, because restoring this institution is the only way we will ever solve the challenges we face. That is the lesson of history and the lesson of experience. We would all be wise to heed it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I congratulate the Republican leader for his remarks. Without being presumptuous, I think I could express the hope that all of us feel that he will help us restore the Senate to the role the American people need it to play in this country.

There is a new history of the Senate, "The American Senate," written by Neil MacNeil, the late Neil MacNeil, who wrote the best book about the House of Representatives, and the former Historian of the Senate. I suspect this book is likely to become the best chronicle of this body. It speaks of the Senate as "the one touch of authentic genius in the American political system." It needs to be restored to that position.

The Republican leader is absolutely right. This does not require a change of rules. This requires a change of behavior—some behavior on our part on this side of the aisle, but a great deal of behavior on the part of whomever the majority leader of the Senate is, because that is the person who sets the agenda.

The debate for this year really is: Will this year be the end of the Senate—which is what the distinguished majority leader said it would be if we ever changed the rules in a way that allowed the majority to cut off debate—or will it be the year in which the Senate is restored, restored to that role of authentic genius in the American system? I hope it would be that way. I hope it starts tomorrow because it could be started as quickly as tomorrow because it requires no change of rules, only a change in behavior, and that could happen as soon as tomorrow. But we know it can happen after November if we have six more Republican Senators on this side.

We have heard your commitment on the floor today about how the committees can operate, about how amendments should operate. We have heard that before in our own meetings, in private lunches, and I am glad you took the occasion in this eloquent way to say to the American people and all of us what we expect out of service in the Senate.

I had the privilege, as the Senator from Kentucky did, of seeing Senator Mansfield as the leader of this body. I have not served in the Senate as long as others who were here, but I came here—it seems hard to believe—47 years ago as a young aide to a Senator

who eventually became the majority leader of the Senate, Howard Baker. Those were the days of Mansfield and Dirksen. Those were the days when Barry Goldwater and John Tower and Hubert Humphrey would engage in hours of debates here and hug each other at the end of their discussion. Those were the days when the Democratic majority leader would offer an amendment of a Republican Senator whose amendment had been denied unfairly, he thought. Those were the days of committees that did their work and Republicans and Democrats who came to the floor and together offered bills.

I saw the Senate in the 1970s when I came back and Senator Baker was the Republican leader and I saw it in the 1980s and the 1990s. I saw what the Republican leader said—let's take the Panama Canal debate. Senator Baker and Senator Byrd would run the Senate in the way the Republican leader suggested, in the way most majority leaders have suggested. They would come to the floor and they would put a bill on the floor that a Republican and a Democratic Senator agreed on—let's say it is Senator McCain and Senator LEVIN, Senator INHOFE and Senator LEVIN. They would ask for amendments. They might get 300 amendments. They would then ask for unanimous consent to cut off all the amendments and of course they would get it because everyone had a chance to have his or her amendment.

Then within that unanimous consent agreement would be a procedure for how to vote on them, and they would say: We are here on Monday and we are going to finish this week, just as the Republican leader had said.

It does not work perfectly. There was a Senator from Alabama, and then there was a Senator from Ohio, and they did all they could to put glue in the works. But the majority leader had all the tools he needed to run the Senate in that way. Everybody got a say. Senator Byrd, in his last remarks before the Rules Committee, and I was there to hear it, said we should never tear down this necessary fence. He meant the filibuster that protects us from an excess of the executive and runaway popular factions. But he said one other thing. Senator Byrd said in 2010 that any majority leader had the tools he needed already in the rules to operate this Senate in the way it should be run. So we need a change in behavior, not a change of the rules.

One more example that goes to the point the Senator from Kentucky made. How important is it to be able to offer an amendment? Serving in the Senate today is like being invited to join the Grand Ole Opry and not being allowed to sing. The people of Tennessee expect me to have an opinion on their behalf about ObamaCare, about Iran, about all of the issues—how do we help unemployed Americans get a job, about the minimum wage or the lack of it. They expect me to have a say about that, not because they want to hear me but because I am their voice.

Senator Byrd wrote eloquently about that in his book. He talked about the Panama Canal debate. There was a tough debate. They didn't just bring the Panama Canal treaty here and plop it on the floor and say we are going to vote on it next Monday. Do you think it would have gotten 67 votes? No, it would not have gotten 67 votes. How did it get 67 votes? The Democratic leader, Senator Byrd, and the Republican leader, Senator Baker, read David McCullough's book and changed their minds and they both supported the treaty. Then they allowed every single amendment and reservation that anybody wanted to offer.

Senator Byrd wrote that many of those were killer amendments. In other words, they were designed to kill the treaty. But, he said, we allowed every one of them—192 of them. Nothing passed that was not acceptable to the joint leadership. He said we beat everything else. We tabled them or defeated them. But if we had not allowed that to happen and the Senators had not had a chance to have their say, we would have never ratified the treaty.

I know there may be others who want to speak. But we have gone down a trail in the last several years—just a few years—that I never thought imaginable. We have 43 new Members of the Senate, 43 Members of the Senate who are in their first term, plus 1, the Senator from Indiana, who is in his first term but served before so he has a broader view of this. Those Senators have never seen this body operate properly. Most of them are on the other side. So it is not necessarily their fault that this is happening, but this is not the way the Senate earned the reputation as the unique deliberative body in the world. No one would recognize it as that today. No one would recognize it as the authentic touch of creative genius in the American system of government.

My hope would be that the Democratic leader would recognize this and have a change of behavior tomorrow, or maybe later this afternoon. But if he does not, I hope the American people take this seriously and take it into account when they cast their votes in November and put six more Republicans on this side of the aisle so a Republican leader can restore this body to the luster it deserves, and the American people deserve, as the authentic touch of genius in the American political system.

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

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

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, we just heard a very eloquent speech given by