



U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

September 26, 2013

Contact: Rob Blumenthal / Eve Goldsher: 202-224-7363

CHAIRWOMAN MIKULSKI SPEAKS IN SUPPORT OF THE SENATE AMENDMENT TO THE HOUSE CONTINUING RESOLUTION

“We have gone from being the greatest deliberative body in the world to the greatest delayed body in the world... When all is said and done, more gets said than gets done.”
says Chairwoman

“You can huff and puff for 21 hours, but you can't blow Obamacare away.”

WASHINGTON – Following the release yesterday of the Senate Appropriations Committee amendment to the House Continuing Resolution, H.J. Res. 59, U.S. Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.), Chairwoman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, spoke today in support of the amendment. Below are her remarks, as prepared for delivery:

“I rise in support of the Democratic amendment to the House Continuing Resolution. We have offered this amendment because its content offers a clear path forward to do three things. Number one, avoid a government shutdown. Number two, lay the groundwork for ending sequester for hopefully the next two years, which means finding a way to reduce our public debt in each of those years by \$110 billion. And, number three, to get rid of the theatrical veto bait, the provocative amendments that are in the House bill, calling for the defunding of the President's Affordable Care Act, and also for the way they structure public debt. We offer this amendment because we think it is the best way forward.

“The American people expect us to do our job. Now here it is, Thursday morning, 10:45, and we're just getting on the amendment. Why? Because for the last several days we had to put up with theatrical politics rather than getting the job done. We have gone from being the greatest deliberative body in the world to the greatest delayed body in the world. The American people are fed up and so are many of us here. When all is said and done, more gets said than gets done.

“Now is the time to act. We have an amendment on the floor. It's open for full debate, and I'm absolutely for that. But we need to do the business of government to be able to do our job. We must replace the sequester and allow a fiscal year 2014 omnibus appropriations bill to move forward before the end of the calendar year. That sentence alone shows what's wrong in communicating with the American people. Factually, it is accurate. It is absolutely truthful. But nobody understands sequester. Nobody understands words like "omnibus," and nobody understands what we're doing, or -- most of all -- what we are not doing.

“Sequester was an invention of the Congress, working with the President, to say that we will reduce public debt over a 10-year period by \$110 billion a year. And if we fail to do that, sequester is triggered. And that means across-the-board cuts. Those cuts are 50 percent in defense spending, and 50 percent in domestic spending. The problem with across-the-board cuts is they cut good programs as well as programs that are dated, duplicative, or dysfunctional. I oppose that. I'd rather make strategic cuts arrived at by the Committee that I chair, the Appropriations Committee. For the last year, our Committee has done its due diligence. Our job is to review programs and to put them in the federal checkbook and bring them to the Senate Floor for debate, for amendments, and then for passage, and to send it to the President.

“What we want to do in our CR amendment, is to change the date in the House bill from December 15th to November 15th to keep the pressure on. And to get the deal needed so Congress can get to work and enact 12 fiscally responsible appropriations bills, lay the groundwork for canceling sequester for two years, and invest in America's needs today and the needs of the future. This amendment is important for two reasons. It prevents a government shutdown. The President has already said he will veto any bill that defunds Obamacare. He will veto any bill that undermines the full faith and credit of the United States. You can huff and puff for 21 hours, but you can't blow Obamacare away. I will repeat: you can huff and puff for 21 hours, but you can't be like the magic dragon that blows the Affordable Care Act away. So if we pass the House Continuing Resolution, the President will veto it.

“More wasted time not getting the job done. Our agencies, instead of doing the job of fulfilling their mission, making wise use of taxpayers' money, and being responsive to the American people, they're planning for a shutdown. Which amounts to a slamdown. The President can sign the Continuing Resolution and keep the government open if we pass the Senate amendment, which will keep the government open until November 15th, which gives us one month to arrive at pragmatic solutions, cancels the provocative elements in it—the elimination of Obamacare and the public debt—and also lays the groundwork for moving forward. Let me give just a few examples of things that will happen if we cannot enact a clean Continuing Resolution, meaning keeping the government open on October 1st. There are consequences here. This isn't just about showbiz. Government has to be open for business.

“An estimated 800,000 civil servants will be sent home or furloughed. Now, what does that mean? You know, if you're an FBI agent during this time, you will be on your job. You will be at your duty station. But when you're working, you won't get paid. You'll get an IOU. What does that say to people who put themselves in the line of fire? We've already told them there will be no cost of living increase for three years. We want to recruit the best and the brightest for the FBI, or at the FDA to oversee our drug approval process, or at the CBP to be border control agents, work that is dirty and dangerous out there. But what are we doing here? We show contempt for the people that work for the government. Shutting down the government means that essential research discoveries will be put on hold. The NIH clinical center won't be able to admit new patients for new clinical trials. Weather forecasters, food safety inspectors, those involved with public safety will be at their duty stations, but they will be receiving IOUs.

“That also shows the contempt for the people. The government should be working as hard as the people who pay the taxes to support the government. The way they work hard is to pay taxes that support the mission and purpose of these agencies, and insist that they do their job. And we insist that we get rid of the dated, the duplicative, and the dysfunctional within the government. We lay the groundwork for doing this. And, in fact, we've been doing it all year long. I chair the Appropriations Committee. It is made up of 12 subcommittees. You'll be hearing from my Subcommittee Chairmen throughout the day. I'm so proud of them. For the last year they've listened. They've taken the President's budget request and they've analyzed it, they've reviewed it, they've scrubbed it and they've squeezed it. I'm really proud of them. And what they are ready to bring to the Senate floor keeps our mission and purpose intact, and makes wise use of taxpayers' dollars. They have listened at every single hearing to Inspectors General, where we learn about the dated, dysfunctional, or duplicative programs, and we're ready to move. But we can't move if we have theatrical showdown politics like we've seen here for the past few days.

“This has grave impact. What we are facing here will have a negative impact on our economy. It will add to the uncertainty for businesses, and hurt their ability to make wise decisions. It will impact public safety, and it will impact our future generations because of the big hit on research and development that comes up with the new ideas that in turn create the jobs of the future.

“Because of NIH funding, thousands of people work in Maryland, but those thousands of people are working for the United States of America. At the end of the day, they're trying to come up with cures that can save lives. By doing the basic research that then helps us have jobs in biomedical research and pharmaceutical industries, and also improve the lives of our people, improve our economy and get the job done. And we should have the same goals here in the United States Senate.”

###