

Office of U.S. Senator Thad Cochran  
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry - Minority

TEXT OF SEN. COCHRAN'S REMARKS ON SENATE FLOOR  
Wednesday, October 16, 2013

Mr. President, I am optimistic that soon we will be able to enact legislation to reopen our government and affirm the world's long-standing confidence in our nation's financial stability and system of democracy. The current situation is an unfortunate byproduct of our sometimes discordant form of government, which at this time happens to be divided between the two parties.

Despite the challenges of recent weeks, I hope this experience demonstrates to the Senate, to the other body, and to the Administration that the nation is best served when we work together. If we allow our current hardships to pass on only to immediately entrench and get ready for the next crisis, we will be wasting an opportunity to extract a positive outcome from these last, difficult weeks.

Under the Rules of the Senate, individual Senators are provided with significant power to shape the activity of this body. That's the way the Senate was designed to operate, and it has served this body and the country well. Recognizing that the rights entrusted to each of us can be powerful, we must be judicious in their application. We must always remember that each of us was elected by the people. If we work in cooperation, and even opposition, with a sense of realism and respect for ourselves and our institution, I believe this body can function effectively.

In getting past our current fiscal stalemates, I hope that we can next achieve a long-term agreement that we will reduce our debt through structural changes to government spending.

As a part of that process, we must talk seriously about the President's health care law; its serious flaws and its impact on families and businesses. I have consistently opposed this law and one of my goals is seeing that it is repealed, delayed or made voluntary. Achieving that goal may take longer than we would prefer, because we are in the minority. But the law's declining popularity should give Senators from both parties reason to reevaluate it.

As part of a sustainable budget plan, I hope we can reach a long-term agreement on a Farm Bill to provide producers and consumers with certainty, and to preserve the security Americans enjoy by our ability to generate independently food and fiber for ourselves and for the world. The Farm Bill this body adopted earlier this year would help accomplish those goals and save 23 billion dollars over the next five years.

If we can achieve a responsible budget agreement for Fiscal Year 2014 and beyond, I am confident the Appropriations Committee can produce bipartisan bills to fund the government in a responsible manner. I hope all members have begun to recognize that our inability to act on individual appropriations bills has reduced each senator's opportunity to help shape federal programs, and has eliminated a principal means of overseeing the Executive Branch.

The Appropriations Committee has long been able to produce bills that reflect input from all members with disparate views, reflecting their different needs and their different priorities. The Committee has continued to do so since passage of the Budget Control Act, which will have the effect of cutting-reducing spending-by more than \$2 trillion from discretionary accounts over the next 10 years. It is the only significant deficit reduction legislation enacted in recent memory. I supported that Act, as did a majority of Senators on both sides of the aisle.

Now we have given ourselves another opportunity to make broader budget reforms. It will be a benefit to the Legislative Branch and the people who elected us if we can establish a budget framework that will enable us to deal in a more transparent manner with all legislation, including appropriations bills and reform measures to simplify our tax code.

Mr. President, I am pleased that we seem close to resolving the current impasse, and I hope that over the coming weeks we can devote ourselves to thoughtful and productive deliberations on the budget. It is important that we act to restore the confidence of the American people in the United States Senate. We must take real steps to strengthen our nation's fiscal foundation so that our that our economy can grow, and American families and businesses can prosper.

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