

chosen to hide themselves into urban areas to prevent being targeted, even using human shields."

Nato officials insisted the pace of the air operations was being maintained. But it has emerged that the US and the French, who have been the two biggest military players until now, are retaining national control over substantial military forces in the Mediterranean and refusing to submit them to Nato authority.

The French have the Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier, two escorting frigates and 16 fighter aircraft, none of which are under the Nato command and control which was announced last Thursday.

Until last week, President Nicolas Sarkozy was the loudest opponent of handing over the operations to Nato control. Nonetheless, the French are not only taking part in the Nato campaign, but are the biggest non-US contributors, with 33 aircraft, double Britain's 17. Not all of these are strike aircraft.

Until Monday, the Americans had performed most of the attacks on ground targets, with the French executing around a quarter and the British around a 10th. Given the US retreat, Nato is seeking to fill the gap, but only the British have pledged more.

"We're very happy that one country decided to bring in more assets," said Van Uhm.

When Nato took over from the coalition it was stressed that it had assumed "sole command and control" of all air operations.

However, countries are dipping in and out of Nato command, withdrawing "air assets" for national operations before returning them to alliance control.

"It's pretty clear that Nato is in command. Nato is in the lead," said Van Uhm. "There are assets under national control in the area. But General Bouchard is commanding what Nato does . . . You could say nothing is happening without Nato knowing."

The general stressed that no air strikes on ground targets in Libya had taken place outside Nato's command.

Six countries are believed to be engaged in the bombing campaign—France, Britain, Canada, Denmark, Belgium, and Norway—with many others involved in policing an arms embargo and enforcing a no-fly zone.

Gaddafi's air force had been grounded, Van Uhm said.

In London, the Ministry of Defence said RAF aircraft had struck targets in Libya on each of the past three days.

Tornado GR4 ground attack planes, flying from the Italian airbase of Gioia del Colle, hit a battle tank and two surface-to-air missile launchers near Sirte on Monday when they launched three anti-armour Brimstone missiles. The previous day, they dropped Paveway IV bombs and fired Brimstone missiles to target a group of 10 armoured vehicles south of Sirte.

On Saturday, they dropped Paveway IV bombs on two tanks in Sirte and also hit "several small ground attack aircraft" on an airfield near Misrata, the MoD said.

Two of the Eurofighter/Typhoons based in Italy have returned to the UK. The Typhoons are not equipped to conduct ground attack operations.

[From the New York Times, Apr. 8, 2011]

KEEPING AHEAD OF QADDAFI

Wars are messy business, and the international effort to keep Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi's forces from slaughtering Libyan rebels and civilians is proving no exception. In recent days, the colonel has thwarted NATO airstrikes by regrouping his forces into densely populated areas. That has left NATO with a seemingly impossible choice: leave some of the regime's most deadly

weapons unmolested, or target them and risk possibly heavy civilian casualties.

There is a much better option: the American A-10 and AC-130 aircraft used earlier in the Libya fighting and still on standby status. President Obama should authorize these planes to fly again under NATO command. Unlike the highflying supersonic French and British jets now carrying the main burden of the air war, these American planes can fly slow enough and low enough to let them see and target Colonel Qaddafi's weapons without unduly endangering nearby populations.

Mr. Obama was right to insist that other participating nations should step up and that the operation be quickly transferred to non-American NATO command. United States forces are already overstretched—and bearing much of the burden in Iraq and Afghanistan—and Libya's uprising is unfolding on Europe's doorstep.

European commanders are fully capable of running the show, and European jet fighters can certainly destroy military targets on desert roads and sparsely populated areas. But no other country has aircraft comparable to America's A-10, which is known as the Warthog, designed to attack tanks and other armored vehicles, or to the AC-130 ground-attack gunship, which is ideally suited for carefully sorting out targets in populated areas.

In a war where rebel ground forces are struggling to train and organize themselves, and foreign ground forces are out of the question, these specialized American planes provide a unique and needed asset. Mr. Obama should make them available to NATO commanders now.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS

Mrs. HAGAN. Mr. President, I rise again today to urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and on both sides of the Capitol to move beyond the unnecessary and distracting partisan bickering and come together to fund our government through the remainder of the current fiscal year, including our military, our early-childhood programs, and our essential health services for our seniors and children.

Six months into the 2011 fiscal year and less than 12 hours before a government shutdown would close off many of the important services to millions of Americans, Congress has yet to fulfill its most basic responsibility and pass a budget.

I know the people of North Carolina or any State did not send us to Washington to point fingers or blame other people for the challenges our country faces. They sent us here to work with our colleagues on commonsense solutions. During my time as budget co-chair in the North Carolina State Senate, I learned two things: First, it is never easy to craft a budget, there are always tough choices to make; and second, our fiscal challenges can only be met if Republicans and Democrats have that commitment to work together.

Despite the impression the American people may have based on what they have seen in recent weeks, I know we can work this out. We have to work together because after we come to an agreement on this year's budget, we

must buckle down and chart out a comprehensive bipartisan path to rein in our nearly \$14 trillion national debt.

I believe we all share the common goal of reducing this year's deficit, but the national debt will not disappear with one bill or in 1 year alone. It will take a comprehensive and long-term approach that moves beyond a singular focus on domestic discretionary spending.

That is why I remain concerned by some of the cuts passed by the House and especially by the dozens of divisive policy riders that are disrupting our ability to chart a pragmatic and responsible fiscal course for our country.

It is why I remain concerned that we are holding up government funding with threats to take away vital health care to millions of American women who could not otherwise afford it. These health services include Pap tests, breast cancer screenings, birth control, and STD testing and treatment. These services, which are funded through title X, were signed into law by President Nixon and supported by George H.W. Bush. According to independent, nonpartisan studies, every \$1 spent on these family planning services saves \$4. Is that not what we are supposed to be working on—reducing the amount of our government spending?

These proposals are the only things standing between a reasonable, bipartisan compromise and an irresponsible government shutdown. If such a shutdown does occur, we risk delivering a crippling blow now to our already fragile economic recovery.

More than 1,000 American small business owners, who were already facing difficulties securing the borrowing they need to expand and add jobs, could see their SBA-backed loans delayed.

We have 368 national parks in our country. Millions of dollars will be lost to the businesses surrounding those parks if we shut down the government. In April of 2010 alone, in North Carolina, more than 1.3 million people visited the national parks and spent millions of dollars. These parks include the Great Smoky Mountains, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and Cape Hatteras National Seashore and others. Tourism in North Carolina is one of our State's largest industries. In 2010, tourists spent \$17 billion across our State, and the tourism industry supports 185,000 jobs for North Carolinians. More than 40,000 businesses in North Carolina provide direct services to travelers. If we close our national parks, these small businesses are at risk of losing customers, losing money, which will make it much more difficult for my State to recover from this tough economy.

We risk putting even more pressure on our already shaky mortgage market by preventing thousands of homeowners from receiving a loan to buy a new house.

As for North Carolina, I am particularly alarmed about the impact a government shutdown would have on our courageous military personnel and

their families who have dedicated their lives to this country. Two weeks ago marines from North Carolina rescued with amazing speed and skill the American F-15 pilot who went down east of Benghazi in Libya. Last week, I spoke with Marine Corps Commandant General Amos on the amazing work of these North Carolina marines. He told me it took only 90 minutes from start to finish to rescue the F-15 pilot.

These warriors are heroes, as are the 120,000 active-duty troops in North Carolina and the approximately 400,000 American troops who are deployed overseas, including 90,000 troops in Afghanistan and 45,000 troops in Iraq. These heroes and their families do not deserve to have partisan bickering jeopardize their financial stability.

More than a third of the people in my State are either in the military, a veteran, or have an immediate family member who is in the military or a veteran. So if the government shuts down and we delay paychecks to our military personnel, it is not just our courageous service men and women whose lives are affected but those of their spouses and their children. I know nobody in this body wants to see that happen. Whether you represent a State with a large military population or not, we are all incredibly grateful for the sacrifices our military personnel and their families give this country every day.

Earlier this week, I cosponsored the bipartisan Ensuring Pay for Our Military, sponsored by my Republican colleague from Texas, Senator HUTCHISON, which would prevent an interruption in the pay for members of the military if there is a government shutdown. This is an important bill—a must-do bill—but I sincerely hope it is an unnecessary bill.

The American people want Members of Congress to work across party lines, avoid an irresponsible government shutdown, and move forward on a sound, comprehensive, and bipartisan plan to put our fiscal house in order. The American people don't care if it is a Republican plan or a Democratic plan, they just want it to be a good plan for our country. That is why this week I signed on to the biennial budgeting bill which is being led by my Republican colleague, Senator ISAKSON, and my Democratic colleague, Senator SHAHEEN. This bill, which will move the Federal budget from an every year to every two-year funding process, is a commonsense, bipartisan approach which will hopefully improve the partisan political bickering.

I urge my colleagues to come together now and fund our service men and women, our VA doctors, our Head Start Programs, and our women's health care so we can move on to the Nation's No. 1 priority, which is tackling our unsustainable national debt.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. I ask unanimous consent to speak for 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rose yesterday to talk about the consequences of a budget shutdown, and I rise again today—hours away from facing that reality.

What I cannot understand for the life of me is after having agreed to \$78 billion in cuts, more than almost 80 percent of the way of where our Republican colleagues originally stated they wanted to be—the last time I checked on a negotiation, when someone comes 80 percent of the way to where you are, you have done rather well. Yet, even in the face of having made those very deep cuts—some of which will clearly affect major services delivered to individuals in this country, but coming together for the understanding of what is necessary to both get this budget year done and being able to begin to significantly reduce the deficit—it is still not enough. Why? Because of a driving force in the House of Representatives on the Republican side that insists on social issues that have nothing to do with the budget and keeping the Nation's business open and making sure this economy stays on track, and growing jobs, and putting families back to work.

I will talk about that issue in a minute. But, again, I wish to revisit that this isn't about some museums closing on The Mall, even though that in and of itself has a tourism and dollar effect on our economy to all those places throughout the country that would be closed down. This is about businesses here in America.

Today the New York Times gave examples of that. It talked about the manufacturing executive whose company supplies goods to Federal agencies; the bank loan officers who make mortgages guaranteed by the FHA, which is one of the single greatest block drivers of mortgages to be done for middle-class working families; the Wall Street analyst who depends on a steady flow of government data. The Federal Government is in and of itself a major driver of the economy and a ripple effect to businesses across the spectrum in our country, and pulls the plug on the other businesses in America that at the end of the day means jobs and at the end of the jobs means a consequence to this fragile economic recovery.

That is why the Chamber of Commerce has come out against a shutdown. That is why the Business Roundtable has talked about it. These are voices of those entities that clearly speak with a one-vision business sense, and they say a shutdown does not make good business sense for America—all, however, risked for some social issues. When the government shut down in 1995, the last time Republicans shut down the U.S. Government—let's not forget that. I was there in the House of Representatives when that happened. The last time Republicans

shut the government down for their ideological views, the Nation's economic growth was slowed by as much as 1 percent in that quarter—a full percent.

In an economy that is in recovery—and a recovery, I would remind people, from where we were to where we are—I think there is a little history we need to remember. I remember in the Clinton years when Democrats balanced the budget for the first time in a generation and created record surpluses, lower unemployment, low interest rates, and the greatest peacetime economy in over a generation. We had surpluses. The CBO, the Congressional Budget Office, said, We are looking at a 10-year outlook that is bright. We were actually years ahead for not only balancing the budget but from ending debt. And here we are. What happened in between? Tax cuts for the wealthiest people in the country under President Bush, two wars unpaid for, a Medicare prescription drug benefit unpaid for, Wall Street allowed to run wild, and we went from a surplus with projections of \$5.6 trillion in 2011 to the challenges we have today. So I know people want to forget the past, but the past is, in part, the reality of our present challenges.

At a time in this fragile economic recovery, where we are ultimately meeting the challenges of global events that also affect us here at home—the unrest in the Middle East, the driving up of oil prices which drives up gasoline prices which drives up commodity prices which drives up food prices, and, therefore, has a consequence not only to every American at the pump but also at the supermarket and in their lives—it has a collective consequence to our economy. What is happening in Japan and whether they will be able to send supplies for some of the most critical elements of our economy in the technology field; the millions of Americans still looking for work, and we are going to give a domestic body blow, all because of social issues—all because of social issues, that doesn't make sense, and it is not necessary. We could have consequences to the markets, the Asian markets. If we close down this government, don't open, the Asian markets on Sunday will begin and that begins setting a trend throughout the globe. This has real consequence to our economy here at home.

It is amazing to me that we have those who wear the uniform of the United States fighting halfway around the globe and they will continue to fight for their country, but they would not be paid. They will earn the pay and eventually they will get it, but while they are in the field they wouldn't get the pay. How about their families here at home who are already suffering not having them with them? All because we are driven by the Republican voices in the House of Representatives over a program called title X. What is title X? Title X is a law signed by President Nixon and ultimately had, as one of its strongest supporters when he was in

the House of Representatives former President Bush, to provide lifesaving health care services for women.

Some voices continue to falsely say this is about abortion. The Federal law is very clear: No Federal dollars can go for abortion services. No Federal dollars can go for abortion services. This is about an array of confidential preventive health services from pregnancy testing to screening for cervical and breast cancer, to screening for high blood pressure, anemia, diabetes, screening for STDs, including HIV, basic infertility services, health education. This is about the very essence of a woman's ability to get health care if she does not have the wherewithal on her own financial condition to be able to go to a doctor. There are many institutions—by the way, including Catholic and religious institutions—that receive title X money. I am sure no one would claim they are providing abortion services.

Why, when we are looking at the very essence of whether it be my daughter or anyone else's daughter in America, or anybody's wife or mother, why is it we must have an ideologically driven issue in the midst of a budget debate? A budget debate is about numbers and it is about making sure services are continued, and it is about making sure the economy continues to prosper and it is about getting people back to work, but it certainly isn't about using an ideological view that this program which ultimately helps women have preventive health care services is somehow an abortion issue when the law clearly says it cannot be under any circumstances. Why would we deny women in this country the ability to have the health care they need so they can be healthy, so they can continue to prosper, so their families can continue to have that mother, that breadwinner, the person who holds that family together, be healthy? I cannot imagine for the life of me that we will shut the government down based on those issues. But that is, in fact, where we are.

When I look at that and when I look at the other elements of what has recently been discussed as a prelude—this is just the opening salvo of a debate that will continue on. Hopefully, we will have a vote. I am ready to vote to keep this government open. I am ready to vote to make sure those who wear the uniform of the United States are paid when they are committing the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of their country. But, more importantly, I wish to be able to vote to have \$78 billion worth of cuts and, at the same time, make sure this economy continues to move forward, continues to grow, continues to put people back to work.

I hope cooler minds can prevail in the House and that the ideological views can be told it is not for a budget debate; have that debate some other time—have those votes, if you want, another time. That is fine. But do not hold the Nation hostage to that issue.

But I see that as only the beginning of what is a broader plan, and that broader plan is another reason why we need to get this budget done so we can move to that other plan in the next fiscal year.

I commend to my colleagues, as we look at that plan, the column written today by Paul Krugman, a Nobel Prize recipient, entitled "Ludicrous and Cruel." Basically, he talks about the Ryan plan that privatizes Medicare, that has large tax cuts for the wealthiest people in the country, that ultimately doesn't do either one of the things that they suggest, in this column, which I commend to my colleagues. He says:

In past, Mr. RYAN has talked a good game about taking care of those in need, like Medicare and seniors and Medicaid for children, but as the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities points out, of the \$4 trillion in spending cuts he proposes over the next decade, two-thirds involve cutting programs that mainly serve low-income Americans.

Then he goes on to say that it is a continuation of the voodoo economics of the tax cuts for the wealthiest people in the country that supposedly are going to create prosperity, and we saw that simply wasn't the case. What it did do is a big part of unraveling the surpluses that Democrats helped to create and drive an enormous amount of the debt that we are realizing and debating today.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that that column be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the New York Times, Apr. 7, 2011]

LUDICROUS AND CRUEL

(By Paul Krugman)

Many commentators swooned earlier this week after House Republicans, led by the Budget Committee chairman, Paul Ryan, unveiled their budget proposals. They lavished praise on Mr. Ryan, asserting that his plan set a new standard of fiscal seriousness.

Well, they should have waited until people who know how to read budget numbers had a chance to study the proposal. For the G.O.P. plan turns out not to be serious at all. Instead, it's simultaneously ridiculous and heartless.

How ridiculous is it? Let me count the ways—or rather a few of the ways, because there are more howlers in the plan than I can cover in one column.

First, Republicans have once again gone all in for voodoo economics—the claim, refuted by experience, that tax cuts pay for themselves.

Specifically, the Ryan proposal trumpets the results of an economic projection from the Heritage Foundation, which claims that the plan's tax cuts would set off a gigantic boom. Indeed, the foundation initially predicted that the G.O.P. plan would bring the unemployment rate down to 2.8 percent—a number we haven't achieved since the Korean War. After widespread jeering, the unemployment projection vanished from the Heritage Foundation's Web site, but voodoo still permeates the rest of the analysis.

In particular, the original voodoo proposition—the claim that lower taxes mean higher revenue—is still very much there. The Heritage Foundation projection has large tax

cuts actually increasing revenue by almost \$600 billion over the next 10 years.

A more sober assessment from the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office tells a different story. It finds that a large part of the supposed savings from spending cuts would go, not to reduce the deficit, but to pay for tax cuts. In fact, the budget office finds that over the next decade the plan would lead to bigger deficits and more debt than current law.

And about those spending cuts: leave health care on one side for a moment and focus on the rest of the proposal. It turns out that Mr. Ryan and his colleagues are assuming drastic cuts in nonhealth spending without explaining how that is supposed to happen.

How drastic? According to the budget office, which analyzed the plan using assumptions dictated by House Republicans, the proposal calls for spending on items other than Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid—including defense—to fall from 12 percent of G.D.P. last year to 6 percent of G.D.P. in 2022, and just 3.5 percent of G.D.P. in the long run.

That last number is less than we currently spend on defense alone; it's not much bigger than federal spending when Calvin Coolidge was president, and the United States, among other things, had only a tiny military establishment. How could such a drastic shrinking of government take place without crippling essential public functions? The plan doesn't say.

And then there's the much-ballyhooed proposal to abolish Medicare and replace it with vouchers that can be used to buy private health insurance.

The point here is that privatizing Medicare does nothing, in itself, to limit health-care costs. In fact, it almost surely raises them by adding a layer of middlemen. Yet the House plan assumes that we can cut health-care spending as a percentage of G.D.P. despite an aging population and rising health care costs.

The only way that can happen is if those vouchers are worth much less than the cost of health insurance. In fact, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that by 2030 the value of a voucher would cover only a third of the cost of a private insurance policy equivalent to Medicare as we know it. So the plan would deprive many and probably most seniors of adequate health care.

And that neither should nor will happen. Mr. Ryan and his colleagues can write down whatever numbers they like, but seniors vote. And when they find that their health-care vouchers are grossly inadequate, they'll demand and get bigger vouchers—wiping out the plan's supposed savings.

In short, this plan isn't remotely serious; on the contrary, it's ludicrous.

And it's also cruel.

In the past, Mr. Ryan has talked a good game about taking care of those in need. But as the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities points out, of the \$4 trillion in spending cuts he proposes over the next decade, two-thirds involve cutting programs that mainly serve low-income Americans. And by repealing last year's health reform, without any replacement, the plan would also deprive an estimated 34 million nonelderly Americans of health insurance.

So the pundits who praised this proposal when it was released were punked. The G.O.P. budget plan isn't a good-faith effort to put America's fiscal house in order; it's voodoo economics, with an extra dose of fantasy, and a large helping of mean-spiritedness.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, this is a time to make sure there is a vote

on this Senate floor on a budget that ends the fiscal year, that encapsulates the \$78 billion in cuts, that strips out social riders that have nothing to do with the budget, that preserves a woman's preventive health care services and moves the country forward in terms of its economic advancement, creating jobs and making sure we don't get thrust back into a recession.

That is what this debate is about. That is what the vote should be about today. I and other members of the Democratic Caucus stand ready to do that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I can only imagine that the American people who are watching this drama unfold in Washington, DC, are scratching their heads and are confused, and are wondering why it is that Congress can't perform one of its most basic functions, which is to make sure that the government continues to operate.

I am reminded of an adage from the days I practiced law, and then presided as a judge in the courtroom: If you can't convince them, confuse them.

Whether it is inadvertently or intentionally or by mistake, I think there is a lot of confusion being encouraged and propagated on the floor. The fact of the matter is, there are three things we are talking about. One is the continuing resolution that the House of Representatives passed and sent over here some time ago, which would fund the Federal Government through the end of the fiscal year. That is one thing.

There is a second thing, which is a bill sent over yesterday that would fund the government for 1 more week and the Department of Defense for the remainder of the fiscal year, which the majority leader has the power to bring to the floor today and have us vote on this afternoon or tonight. But the President of the United States has sent out a veto message saying he would veto it.

Then, the third thing that is being discussed—and it may be the most confusing of all—is when Speaker BOEHNER says it is all about the money, and Majority Leader REID says, no, it is about the policy riders—well, I submit that it is about the money. It is not about objections to policy, which 49 of our Democratic friends have voted for in the past, which has been signed into law by President Clinton and signed into law by President Obama himself.

The real casualties of this dysfunction here, and the inability of Congress to get its work done, unfortunately, fall on men and women in uniform. In my State, a large Army installation, as the Presiding Officer knows, is located in Killeen, TX, at Fort Hood. On November 5, 2009, a tragedy hit Fort Hood when Major Hassan killed 13 people in what could only be described as a domestic act of terrorism. Shortly after that, a number of our military who were deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan

are now in the process of returning. The three corps soldiers are finally returning from Iraq and individuals such as SPC Kevin Gallagher of Tiger Squadron Calvary Regiment, who is a Purple Heart recipient, is just coming back from Iraq. Soldiers of the 20th Engineer Battalion and the 36th Engineer Brigade are returning to Fort Hood from Afghanistan.

I wonder what they are thinking now, along with their families, when, as a result of the Federal Government dealing with its most basic responsibilities, they are not going to get paid—starting tomorrow—unless the majority leader takes up the temporary bill that was passed yesterday in the House and sent over here and we vote on it today to make sure our troops and their families continue to get funded, and get the pay they so richly have earned and deserve.

We have heard, as I said, a lot of talk about riders. The only thing that is contained in this bill that could be called a policy rider, about which there appears to be confusion, is one that 49 Senate Democrats have voted on in the past—a spending bill with regard to abortion funding in the District of Columbia. President Obama has signed it into law, President Clinton signed that into law, and 49 Senate Democrats voted for it in the past. Yet this becomes somehow the obstacle to paying our troops what they have earned.

The argument sounds as if we will not fund our troops like we can't fund abortions in the District of Columbia. I think it is a terrible shame and I think it galvanizes public opinion about everyone in Washington.

I think the President and his advisers are wrong if they think a government shutdown will help Democrats and help him get reelected and hurt Republicans. I think people are saying: a pox on all your houses. You need to work together to solve problems, to cut spending, to cut the deficit, deal with the unsustainable debt, and you need to get on with it now.

The fact of the matter is, we continue to spend 40 cents out of every dollar in Washington as borrowed money. We know that the debt held by the public—and this is under the President's own budget proposal—would double in 5 years, and it would triple in 10 years, because the President himself, who is obligated under the Budget Act to send over his requested budget, does nothing to deal with the debt crisis that is threatening our Nation, threatening our prosperity and our freedom.

As China continues to loan us money, we are subject to the tender mercies of a country that I submit we do not want to be subject to the tender mercies of. We need to deal with this.

Unfortunately, the President and some of my friends across the aisle have been very critical of the proposed budget of PAUL RYAN in the House. At least he tries to deal with the reality of the hand we have been dealt, or which some of us have created. The President

himself ignores his own fiscal commission report that came out in December of 2010.

On this chart, here is what the wall of debt looks like, unless we deal with this problem. According to the President's own budget, it gets worse and worse. In 1997, it was roughly \$5 trillion. Now we are looking at about a \$14 trillion debt. If we don't do anything about it, if we continue business as usual in Washington and don't cut spending and deal with the structural and systemic problems facing us and our debt crisis, it will continue to get worse and worse.

This is another sobering chart. This shows when we borrow the money, we have to pay interest to the people who buy that debt. This chart shows that the interest paid by 2021—the last year of the President's proposed budget—that the amount of money paid in interest, at assumed rates, which are now very low, is \$931 billion, which is more than transportation, more than defense, and more than Medicare.

We have been told by the experts that if interest rates were to go up—if, for example, we incur a period of inflation, this number could explode into multiples of this figure, putting us into a death spiral—economically speaking—and we could end up like Greece or Portugal. The only problem is that there is nobody out there to bail out the United States of America. The only one that can stop this is us.

Secretary Geithner said the debt limit ceiling has to be raised sometime in the period between middle May and July. That is the big event. What we are talking about now is a preliminary skirmish, albeit very important. I will tell you, I do not intend to vote to increase the credit card limit of the Federal Government, unless we can get systemic reform that will deal with this very real problem.

One of those ways to do that would be to pass a balanced budget amendment. All 47 Senators on our side have now agreed to a constitutional amendment provision that would require a balanced budget. We hope our friends across the aisle will join us in passing it. The last time this was considered, we came within one vote—in 1997—of passing a balanced budget amendment. The deficit was \$107 billion. Now it is \$1.5 trillion. The debt was around \$5 trillion and now it is \$14 trillion. So if it was compelling enough that it came that close to passage in 1997, how much more compelling now is the evidence that we need to pass a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution?

In closing, I hope cooler heads will prevail tonight, that those who seek political advantage via the game of "gotcha"—a world class sport in Washington, DC—will forbear and allow us to get on with the big fights, which are dealing with this unsustainable debt, these huge deficits, and not threaten the paycheck of the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States, who are fighting three wars

around the world, and whose families are calling my office.

Mr. President, I guess they are calling your office and that of the Senator from Michigan and New York also, saying: What are you doing, and why can't you get this taken care of so that we don't have to add this to our list of burdens while our loved ones are away fighting America's wars.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, first, I ask unanimous consent that at 4 p.m. the majority leader be recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I agree with my colleague and friend from Texas about the fact that people are scratching their heads. People in Michigan are wondering what in the world is going on right now. We are still trying to recover from a recession and we have a long way to go for most Americans—even though the unemployment rate has come down substantially in Michigan. At one point, we were at 15.7 percent, and that is just what you count, in terms of unemployment. Now it is 10.7 percent and going down. Still, it is way too high. Families are under water, their houses are under water, and they are trying to recover in terms of their incomes and hold it together and look for new work or job training. And what about the kids in college and all that comes with that? Some in the middle class may be struggling to stay in the middle class, or just get into the middle class.

Small businesses are wondering what the heck is going on around here when they are trying to, hopefully—folks who held on through the recession and trying to come back, trying to invest, keep the doors open, hire more people—they are wondering what in the world is going on here.

We are in a situation where these negotiations have now just become so political and the discussion so unrelated to what the budget is about and, most importantly, to what people care about. The political piece of this now, about pulling in issues around women's health care, is distracting us from getting a 6-month budget done, which is distracting us from what we ought to be talking about, which is jobs and the economy and putting people back to work and supporting small businesses to get the capital they need to grow. We are in a situation now where the whole process has been politicized to the point where it is extremely disappointing to me and extremely concerning.

What the bottom line ends up being is that middle-class families, veterans concerned about their disability claims, or seniors concerned about their Social Security or Medicare claims, or small businesses that are putting together loan applications or somebody trying to close on their

house with FHA is being held hostage to politics that have nothing to do with the budget.

This latest distraction over breast cancer screenings and cervical cancer screenings for women and girls is just another in a long list of distractions from the budget crisis and, most importantly, from the focus that we need to have on creating jobs.

We have all agreed that Washington, just like every family, has to change the way it does business, has to focus on cutting the items that are not important, to focus on what is important. Every dollar that is being paid, every taxpayer giving a dollar has found it is a lot harder to earn that dollar than to give that dollar. We better be taking care of that dollar, stretching it as far as possible and focusing it on the things that are most important because those dollars are hard to come by these days. That is the reality.

We have come together. It has been a long time in coming, but we have come together. We have agreed on significant spending cuts, changes, while keeping a focus on education, innovation, and growth of the future. Now, at the eleventh hour, all of a sudden what was agreed to in terms of significant spending cuts to allow us to bring the budget together and focus on deficit reduction, somehow that is gone and we are now talking about whether women's health care will be funded in this country, whether women are going to be able to receive blood pressure checks, cancer screenings, and other preventive care efforts.

Is that really what this is about? Are we really going to hold middle-class families, small businesses, and veterans hostage over blood pressure checks for women and cancer screenings for women? Really? Is that what this is about? Stunning. This is absolutely stunning.

In the great State of Michigan, women's health clinics that at this point are proposed for elimination provided 55,000 cancer screenings last year, and there were 3,800 abnormal results. Women who found out those results early were able to detect their cancers early and get the treatment they needed to save their lives. It could be your mom, your grandmother, your daughter, your friend, your neighbor, somebody at church.

Is this really about telling women in communities across Michigan—in Marquette, Muskegon, Burton, Owosso, Three Rivers—that they cannot get their breast cancer screenings; telling women in Flint, Grand Rapids, Ypsilanti, and Sturgis that they cannot get their cervical cancer screenings; telling women in Warren, Brighton, Big Rapids, and Battle Creek that they cannot get their blood pressure checked or their cholesterol tested? Are Republicans really planning to shut down the government and hold middle-class families and veterans hostage in order to stop breast cancer screenings and cholesterol checks? Unbelievable. I think it is shameful.

It is time to come together and get this budget done. As I understand it, there was an agreement last night on the level of spending cuts. We need to get this done and move on to the real focus and debate we need to be having about how we grow the economy and compete in a global economy.

There could be a lesson learned from what people in my State have gone through and done in the last couple of years. We did not give up on the American automobile industry. With the support and help of our President and Members here, despite some incredibly tough times and difficulties in terms of cutting back that had to take place, we did not give up. Workers sacrificed cutting starting pay in half; retirees, the companies, the shareholders, communities, everybody got together and said: We know there is a big problem, and we are going to get this fixed, and we are going to sacrifice together.

Then we did an important thing with the support of people here, and I am very grateful for it. We said: We are going to invest like crazy in innovation. Because we did that, that combination of resetting the budget and the finances for the auto industry and then investing in innovation with the great help of our wonderful engineers and skilled labor force and a whole lot of smart people who came together with battery investments and retooling loans and are bringing jobs back from Mexico now and investments in new advanced manufacturing, we are not only growing and for the first time since 1999 the American companies are making a profit, but we are winning the awards. We are winning all the awards for top quality, the great vehicles of the future.

I suggest that would be a good model for us: Come together on what we need to do, push the reset button, come together and get our arms around spending, balance the budget, tackle the deficit, and then invest like crazy in the future, in innovation and education and rebuilding America.

Where we are today is extremely concerning to me because instead of talking about how we compete in a global economy, instead of talking about the United States vs. China, which is what we should be talking about, or Germany, India, or Korea, we are at a place where we are talking about whether the Federal budget and middle-class families will be held hostage in order to stop cancer screenings and research for women in this country.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. REED). The Senator's time has expired.

Ms. STABENOW. I urge we come together.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. JOHANNIS. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the budget issues we are facing, the continuing resolution—all the issues that have been talked about over the last week or so. Oftentimes when I speak on the Senate floor, I talk about what it is like back home in

Nebraska. I do so because I am enormously proud of my State. It just seems our State does so many things right. Again today I am going to take a moment or two to get started and talk a little bit about that and my experience in dealing with budget issues.

I had the great honor at one point to serve a couple terms as mayor of a great city, the community of Lincoln, NE. It was a strong mayoral form of government. Each year I would have the responsibility of preparing a budget and submitting it to a seven-person city council that would take it apart and put it back together. I would work with them to get a budget done.

It never occurred to me that as mayor of that city I had the ability not to do a budget. I cannot imagine walking into a state of the city address and saying to the good people of Lincoln that after giving it some thought, I decided that it was going to be a situation where I would not be submitting a budget for consideration of the city council. It just never occurred to me.

I look at that community today led by a mayor who is very capable. It happens to be of the other political party than I am. That community has the lowest unemployment rate of any community in the United States. Why? Because people take a pretty conservative view of things. In fact, in preparing that budget, we would literally go item by item, police cars, police salaries, fire engines, whatever, and literally list them item by item and then the amount. At some point there would be a line drawn through the page where we had spent all of the money we had, all of the money available that year was spent. Everything below that line was not funded. If I went below that line or a council member did and said: We want more done here, we want to fund that item, then we had to go above the line and find the money in another program or we had to raise taxes. Those were the choices we had.

After that, I had the great honor of serving the State of Nebraska as its Governor for two terms. Actually, the budget process did not differ that much. Each year as Governor I would submit at the start of the year a budget to our Nebraska unicameral. I would deliver a state of the State address where I would talk about priorities or budget issues, whatever I chose to talk about as Governor.

There were three things I could guarantee the citizens each year: No. 1, that a budget would be submitted and it would be approved; No. 2, we would not borrow any money—any money—to balance that budget because our constitution essentially prohibits elected officials at the State level from borrowing money; and No. 3 was that the budget would, in fact, be balanced.

We did not have the option of going out to the bond market and issuing debt to mask the lack of discipline to get the spending under control. We, again, had just a few choices: Choice No. 1 was we could cut spending; choice

No. 2 was we could raise taxes; and choice No. 3 was we could do some of both. I always favored the cut spending piece because if revenues were down, it told me that people were earning less and they were spending less, and because of that, less money was coming into the State treasury. Why should I as Governor go out and beat them up some more by raising their taxes?

I, as you know, spent a 3-year period of time as Secretary of Agriculture. I was given a budget by the Congress, and it never occurred to me I should spend more than what was allocated to me. I would always tell my subcabinet and my cabinet, when I was Governor: Look, this isn't magic, it is math. If the math doesn't work, then we have to come to grips with this.

With all due respect to my colleagues who have come to the floor throughout the day and have talked about what this process is or isn't, and whether funding is going to be done for this program or what rider is there, all I want to say is this: What we are finally focused on in this great Nation is what we should have been focused on decades ago; that is, we are spending more than is coming in. Every dollar overspent is put on a credit card, and it doesn't go away. It won't be canceled at my death.

I have been going across our State with charts and graphs to try to illustrate this point. I turned 60 this year. When I was a 20-year-old man, our government owed \$380 billion. Now, I am sure at that point in time many argued that was way too much debt. The projections now are—under President Obama's plan—by the end of this decade, on my 65th birthday, we will owe \$20 trillion. So in the span of one lifetime—one lifetime—we have gone from \$380 billion to \$20 trillion.

Mr. President, that has consequences. Now, maybe that doesn't have consequences for a man who is 60 years old—maybe it does; I believe it does—but beyond the shadow of a doubt, no matter which side you want to be on, it has consequences for our children and grandchildren.

So you see, it isn't about an individual rider, an individual program. It is about the fact that we are spending this great Nation into an absolutely hopeless abyss. If we don't come to grips with that, if we don't come to grips with this, this won't turn out, and it won't turn out for anybody.

When I came here 2 years ago, I was stuck. Every conversation was, how do we spend more? I thought there would be a stimulus package when I was elected to the Senate. I thought maybe it would even be a package that I would support. Then somebody said it had to be a \$500 billion package, all borrowed money, and I started getting real squeamish about that. Then somebody outbid them and said: No, I think it has to be a \$750 billion package. Then I really got squeamish, and I knew I couldn't support that. Then someone raised the ante, and by the

time this was all done, with interest, we borrowed from China and other places \$1 trillion. And I thought, my goodness, will we take a breather at some point? But there was no breather. There was a health care bill with more gimmicks and scoring than you can possibly imagine.

So here we are today, fighting over whether this continuing resolution should be \$30 billion in cuts or \$60 billion in cuts. Quite honestly, in the grand scheme of what our Nation is facing, that is pitiful. It is almost tragic. If we don't come to grips with this soon, the big picture, this absolutely is going to destroy any future that our kids and grandkids might have hoped for in the United States of America.

But hope springs eternal. I look at the glass as half full all the time. I think we are going to get through this. I think we will deal with the issues before us—maybe in ways some like, some dislike—but if we don't come together somehow, some way, and deal with what the real issue is—that we are spending a great nation into the Stone Age—we are going to be a lesser nation than any of us could have ever imagined, and that affects every priority. That affects Medicaid, Social Security, education, national defense, homeland security—you name your priority, it affects it all.

So today I count myself as one who wants to come down to the floor at some point before the day is out and vote to solve this problem, but then I want to do all I can to work with my colleagues to deal with what is really facing us, which is debt that is out of control, spending that is out of control, with a situation where no budget was submitted and not a single appropriations bill. That is where we find ourselves today, trying to patch this together because we didn't come to grips with the budget process last year. Mr. President, that doesn't seem right to me.

With that, Mr. President, I conclude my remarks, and I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, I rise today to ask a simple question: What are we doing here? What are we doing jeopardizing our economic recovery to score political points?

I happen to agree with my friend and colleague from Nebraska. I am optimistic also in that we have agreed on a \$78 billion reduction in the 2011 budget. The glass isn't half full, it is more than three-quarters full. They are grandstanding over the Federal budget when we should be focusing on making sure American families can make their monthly budgets and get back to work.

I am here to downplay the need to cut the Federal deficit. I agree with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle—we need to make real cuts now. We have already committed to the deepest cuts in discretionary spending since World War II. Given that we are already halfway through the fiscal year,

these cuts are a good downpayment on even more progress in our fiscal 2012 budget and beyond.

As a member of the Senate Budget Committee, I am already putting forth concrete recommendations for more cuts in future budget years, such as eliminating the "orphan earmarks," saving upwards of \$1 billion; cutting subsidies for millionaire farmers, saving, again, billions of dollars; cutting tax loopholes, saving tens of billions of dollars.

Shutting down the government is not going to get us any closer to the real goal of reducing the deficit. We didn't save a single dime during the last shutdown. In fact, it cost the American taxpayers \$1.4 billion.

The economic costs will be even more. Dozens of military construction projects are stalled right now, putting at risk hundreds of jobs this summer and needed improvements to Alaska's military bases. I have talked to these contractors, these individuals who are waiting for us to get our work done to provide the certainty they need to get their work done. There is over \$¼ billion pending and waiting for the work to be done.

Military families are also caught in the middle. The military will get paid, but the uncertainty of when they will get paid, because they will be waiting on us to pass a bill, is unfair. We should push harder to work out a compromise for them.

At the same time, civilian construction projects and the jobs created by them for docks, housing, and facilities are also at risk. Critical contracts to move forward on the land transfers to the State of Alaska and Alaska Native Corporations will not get done in time for the summer work.

Alaska businesses looking to start new operations won't be able to get the SBA loans, families won't get the FHA or the USDA home loans, and the tax refunds for people who have sent in their taxes by mail won't be processed.

Also, key permits to onshore oil and gas development, which have been painfully slow to move forward, will be stalled even further.

When I was home during this past week, I heard from some of the more than 17,000 Federal workers in Alaska about their concerns. It might be easy for some to criticize public employees, but in Alaska these workers are members of our communities. They contribute to our economy, pay taxes, and they provide critical services all across my State. Many are getting by paycheck to paycheck. A shutdown could mean their rent doesn't get paid, their mortgages are put at risk, and their bank accounts won't balance. We cannot and should not play politics with their jobs just because we are not doing our job.

Americans—Alaskans—are frustrated. They are wondering what the heck we are doing here, and I agree with them. It has only been 3 months since the new Congress convened. Not

much to report back home to Alaskans who work every day making progress in our State.

It is past time to get back to work, to roll up our sleeves, finish this budget, and put the 2012 budget on the table and focus on the economy and creating jobs. Our economy is starting to turn the corner. Frankly, the many steps Congress took over the last 2 years to rebuild this economy are working. Unemployment dipped to 8.8 percent, 216,000 jobs were created last month—the largest increase since last May—and TARP, which we all had mixed feelings about, is not only being paid back. It is returning a profit to the Federal Government.

Let's not put a wrench in our economic recovery. These are good data points, but we are far from getting the job done. The economy is still fragile. Rising gas prices make it harder. We need to show voters and the folks back home we can work together on deficit reduction but also tackle energy legislation, tax reform, small business support, and education investment.

I know it will not be easy to get all this done, but this is what folks in my State sent me here to do—to get the work done, balance the budget, reduce spending, and continue to invest in growing our economy. I always tell Alaskans when I get back home that all the easy issues are done. Only the hard ones are left. That is why we are here.

Mr. President, it is time for us to get back to work.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a period for morning business for debate only be extended until 6 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the majority leader to be recognized at 6 p.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Hearing no objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BEGICH. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today, as so many of my colleagues have, to discuss the situation we find ourselves in. Many ask: What has happened? Why are we here? Why is there so much coverage and concern about a potential shutdown of the United States Government?

I was on a radio station report from Washington by phone to Wyoming earlier this morning with a friend of mine, and he was asking how we got into this situation and what we can do about it.

Well, there are two different situations we are in. One is, we are in this situation because a budget, a responsible budget, that should have been passed 7 months ago—when the Democrats were in charge of the House, in charge of the Senate, and in the White House—was never passed. That is what we are dealing with today in one part.

The bigger part of how we got into this situation is that we are a nation in significant debt. We owe a remarkably large amount of money—\$14 trillion is the number that is consistently discussed. Very few people have a concept of exactly how much money that is. Yet we owe that amount of money. People say: Who do we owe it to? I visited with a group of high school students from Douglas, WY, earlier this week, and I asked them: Do you know who we owe the money to? They said: Yeah, we owe a lot of it to China.

That is of great concern to the people of America, people concerned about national security, our financial security, and how we as a nation are viewed in the world, as well as how we view ourselves.

As families across this country, we live within our means. We balance our budgets every year. I am from Wyoming, where, according to our constitution, we must balance our budget every year, and we do. That is why we have money available for scholarships and other opportunities for young people, as we invest the money that we have saved from year to year in our people, in our future, in our communities, and in our land. Yet Washington doesn't seem to learn that lesson, even today.

So here we are with this situation where we are looking at a potential shutdown of the government because this government has maxed out its credit card. Others may decide to no longer extend credit to us, and it has come down to the final hour.

Every day this government spends \$4 billion more than it takes in. Last month, Washington spent eight times as much money as it took in. Every American child is now born owing \$45,000. This is a travesty. When I take a look at this and say, we know now how we got into this situation: We have overspent. Our problem is not that we are taxed too little, it is that we spend too much. The American people understand that. So what we need to do is get the spending under control. We need to spend less.

We are in a situation where you say, what can we do about it right now, today? Well, for those same high school students who are here from Douglas, WY, they know a bill starts in the House and then goes to the Senate, and is passed by one body, passed by another body, goes to the President for his signature. So here we are. We do have a bill that has been passed by the House of Representatives to keep the government open, to keep the government functioning. I am ready right now to vote for that bill.

What has the President of the United States said about that? The President has threatened to veto that bill. He said he would veto a bill that would temporarily extend and keep the government open for 1 week. So apparently the President is not interested in keeping this government open for the next week through tonight at midnight.