Mr. President, as

of now, we are scheduled to vote on a

motion to proceed to S.J.R. 20 regarding

Libya. We have been called into

session—having made plans to spend

this week in our States meeting with

constituents, as we try to do at least

once a month—because there is a budget

crisis in this country, because we

have a debt ceiling of over $14 trillion

that is getting ready to be hit and we

need to focus on that and that alone

during this week. We have been talking

about it, we have been talking around

it, but, honestly, we don’t seem to be

making much progress. If we are going

to do anything this week, we should be

talking about how we are going to address

this issue.

This is what is on the minds of the

people of our country today. I was

home over the weekend, having just

gotten back, and everyone I talked to

is scared to death about this debt,

about what is going to happen. People

think there does need to be significant

change, reform, a different way of

doing business than borrowing and borrowing

and borrowing. They are also

concerned about hitting the debt ceiling

and not lifting it. They are wondering

what in the heck we are going

to do.

So now we are back here in session

because of that crisis, and somehow we

are talking about Libya. Libya is important.

It is important because there

are American troops, part of a coalition

that was put there by the President

without consulting Congress, and

now there is a resolution, which, frankly,

I cannot support. I will not give the

President authority to continue. I

think we need a full and fair debate.

But now is not the time to be doing

this, when we are 4 weeks away from a

potential debt crisis that could affect

the people in our country right now—

people who depend on our government

to function—as well as our global

standing.

So let’s talk about what we could do.

What we could do is produce a budget.

It has been 797 days or so since the Senate

has passed a budget resolution. So

we haven’t set the level of spending

and the priorities for spending that are

our constitutional responsibility. It is

Congress’s responsibility to pass a

budget. We haven’t passed a budget in

almost 2 years—almost 2 years.

We have to do that because we are

coming up on—in about 3 months—the

end of a fiscal year. We should be passing

appropriations bills that are based

on a budget. But we don’t have a budget.

So I would say, let’s get back to basics.

When you have a big problem, you

go back to the basics, where you have

to start to solve a problem. And the basics

are a budget. I think we all agree

if we get a budget on the floor there is

going to be a lot of amendments. There

is going to be a lot of amendments to

a budget resolution. Let’s get started.

Let’s use this week to produce a budget

resolution and let’s start having the

amendments about spending levels,

about spending priorities. That will be

a way we can start the process of determining

if we can, in fact, lift the debt

ceiling.

There are significant cuts in spending

we can make as a country that

would show the rest of the world—

those holding our debt, as well as the

American people who are living with

this government and holding part of

the debt—that we are serious; that we

are going to get our financial house in

order, and we are going to do it with a

budget resolution that cuts spending

and sets priorities as every family and

every business in this country is required

to do. Most States, by the way,

are required to do it as well. A few

don’t, and we see them sort of ambling

over toward the ‘‘B’’ word—bankruptcy—

which is just not a possibility.

That is not a possibility for this country.

We need to take the reins right

now to assure the world knows we are

not going to handle our fiscal responsibilities

by continuing to borrow when

we know we don’t have the revenue

coming in to pay for all these programs.

So I am going to vote against cloture

today. I am going to vote against cloture,

along with, I know, many people

for different reasons. Some people are

voting against cloture because they do

not think we ought to be giving the

President the authority to continue

going into another country’s civil war

when we have such commitments in Afghanistan

and Iraq, when we are over deploying

our troops, when we are

spending money that we are having to

borrow, when we are taking the lion’s

share of this responsibility for our allies.

Many of us think we shouldn’t be

adding another country, where it is

supposed to be a support function,

when we all know that is what leads to

something more, and then something

more. I thought Senator LUGAR said it

very well when he said that then you

have the aftermath of the end of a civil

war and the responsibilities for that.

This is not the time, in my opinion, to

be giving that kind of authority to the

President.

But above that—above that—we are

here because there is a crisis upon

which I think we have a united view of

the goal, and that is to put our fiscal

house in order. But we are not united

in the Senate about how to do it. So

let’s have that debate this week. Let’s

have that debate that says we should

be spending more or we should be

spending less; that we should be taxing

more or taxing less, because we have

real disagreements on that.

I am in the spend less, tax less group,

but there are views that are differing.

Let’s put it out there and start the debate.

Because if we have a budget resolution,

then everything can be solved

from there. If we have a budget resolution

that we can agree is the right

amount of spending for the debt crisis

we are in, then we will know the way

forward to dealing with the debt crisis.

That is a real possibility, and that is

what we ought to be talking about.

I will not support cloture on a motion

to proceed to a Libya agreement

that says the President can continue

the involvement. I think we need to

deal with the crisis that Congress has a

say in doing. Certainly Congress had a

say in producing it, and we are the

ones responsible to the American people

for solving the problem that has

been created.

I urge my colleagues not to vote for

cloture on the motion to proceed to the

Libya resolution and, instead, turn to

the budget, put a budget resolution

out, and, for the first time in almost 2

years, we can begin to talk together to

solve this problem by passing a budget

resolution that will lower spending and

hopefully keep taxes low so our fragile

economy can continue on the path toward

improvement, that would have

businesses feel confident to hire people,

rather than putting obstacles in place,

and get this unemployment rate of

over 9 percent off the books. That

would be the answer for this week, in

my opinion.

I hope the majority leader will turn

to the budget and let’s solve the crisis

at hand. I think that is why we are in

session this week.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.