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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, our refuge and strength, our ever-present help in troubled times, we need You during this season of challenge. Our lawmakers need Your presence to help them build bridges that will keep our Nation strong and to forge alliances that will glorify You. Filled with Your wisdom, may our Senators find solutions to the complex problems we face.

With gratitude for all the blessings and benefits You generously bestow, help us to reveal our appreciation by living with honor. Keep us from taking for granted the faithful service of the many unsung heroes and heroines who support our Senators, and reward them for their willingness to make daily sacrifices for liberty. During this time of armed conflict, we also pray for our courageous men and women in harm's way.

We lift this prayer in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. INOUE).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, July 13, 2011.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Madam President, following any leader remarks, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1323, which is a bill to express the sense of the Senate on shared sacrifice in resolving the budget deficit, with 1 hour of debate equally divided and controlled. The filing deadline for all second-degree amendments to S. 1323 is 10 a.m. this morning.

At approximately 10:40, there will be up to two rollcall votes. The first will be a motion to invoke cloture on S. 1323, the piece of legislation I just spoke about. The second rollcall vote will be on a motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and related agencies appropriations bill.

ECONOMIC TEAMWORK

Mr. REID. Madam President, sometimes it is very hard to find common ground in Washington. But there is one thing on which Republicans and Democrats agree: It is absolutely necessary that Congress prevent a catastrophic

default on the Nation's debt that would put our economy at grave risk. I have said it, and so have my Republican colleagues.

The business community is shouting out very loudly the same thing. This week, business leaders wrote to Congress—in fact, it was yesterday—and the White House to ask us to put our differences aside and avert a default crisis before it is too late. Literally hundreds of CEOs, including executives of some of the Nation's largest companies and the most respected business groups, signed the letter—more than 300. They wrote, "This is a risk our country must not take." They said that if we don't reach a deal soon, the stock market will be in "disarray." We all know that. We all know we cannot afford to have our country crash. Our economy is already struggling to stay on course to recovery. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce president Tom Donahue, who signed the letter, also said earlier this week that a default would have "dire consequences for our economy, our markets, and Main Street Americans."

Business leaders are begging us to do something and to do it quickly. That is why I was shocked to hear the Speaker of the House say yesterday that averting a default crisis was President Obama's problem, not his. That is not what he said a few months ago when he urged us to "deal like adults" with the problem. It wasn't what he said when he voted to raise the debt ceiling seven times while George W. Bush was President, increasing the debt limit by \$4 trillion. In fact, when the Speaker voted to increase the debt limit by nearly \$1 trillion one time alone in 2003, he didn't demand that it be accompanied by massive spending cuts or any spending cuts. Instead, a Republican Congress approved hundreds of billions of dollars in tax cuts for the wealthy, which contributed to our massive debt, and they were all on borrowed money. All those massive tax

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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cuts people received around the country were on America's credit card that has now come due.

Congress has raised the debt limit 89 times since it was created in 1939—54 times with Republican Presidents and 35 times under Democratic Presidents. Ronald Reagan asked Congress to raise the limit 18 times—and we raised it—twice as many as any other President. Republicans never claimed then that the issue was the President's problem. For Republicans to claim now that the deficit is a problem only for the President or Democrats in Congress is irresponsible. It is even more irresponsible considering President Bush, with the help of Republicans here in Congress, doubled the debt while he was President. That is more debt accumulated than any President in history, by far.

This problem belongs to all of us in Congress, and it will take all of us working together—political parties aside—to make a deal possible. This is not money being borrowed to spend more money; it is money we need to raise the debt ceiling so we can pay the bills we have already accrued.

Democrats realize finding common ground isn't always easy. If it were, we would have hammered out an agreement a long time ago. But reducing the deficit and getting our fiscal house in order is too important to quit when the going gets tough.

Theodore Hesburgh, the famous president of the University of Notre Dame, said this about making difficult decisions:

You don't make decisions because they are easy; you don't make them because they are cheap; you don't make them because they're popular; you make them because they're right.

It is time for Democrats and Republicans to get together to do what is right for our Nation. We simply cannot allow our country to fail to pay its bills for the first time in its history. I am confident we will find a way to get this done. The risks to our economy are too great not to.

I was happy to hear yesterday—I received a phone call from the Republican leader at 12:30 yesterday. He has come forward with a proposal to address the debt limit. I am studying it and discussing it with my Senators. I have another meeting at 11 o'clock. Senator MCCONNELL has spent a great deal of time working on this, and I commend him for his thoughtful and unique proposal. It is something we have to look at very closely. I am heartened by what I read. This is a serious proposal, and I commend the Republican leader for coming forward.

I believe the Republican leader's proposal, combined with ideas he and I have been discussing to force a vote on deficit-reduction proposals, could go a long way toward resolving the impasse in which we now find ourselves. We both agreed a long time ago that the problem is not the President's. It is our problem, it is every American's problem, and certainly it is the problem of every Member of Congress.

In the meantime, this afternoon congressional leaders will again meet with President Obama and his senior advisers to try to advance our discussions.

Democrats realize finding common ground isn't always easy. As I said before, if it were, we would have hammered out an agreement a long time ago. But I say again, reducing the deficit and getting our fiscal house in order is too important to quit when the going gets tough. I am confident that somehow, somehow, we will find a way to get this done. We can't allow our country for the first time in its history to fail to pay its bills. The risks to our economy are far too great not to.

In that letter we received yesterday, American business leaders said it very well:

Now is the time for our political leaders to put aside partisan differences and act in the Nation's best interests. It is time to pull together rather than pull apart.

So I urge my Republican colleagues to remember this: We are not opponents, squaring off across a baseball diamond or some playing field. We are on the same team with the same goal in mind. Let's take, for example, the baseball team I just talked about. If the catcher doesn't show up or refuses to play, it doesn't matter how good the pitcher is, it doesn't matter how good his curve is or how fast he can throw that ball, the team doesn't stand a chance without a catcher. A team is needed to accomplish the goals of a baseball team. We need a team to accomplish the goals this Congress has. It is time each and every one of us here in Congress remembered that. In the words of American business leaders, "It's time to pull together rather than pull apart."

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

SHARED SACRIFICE IN RESOLVING THE BUDGET DEFICIT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1323, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1323) to express the sense of the Senate on shared sacrifice in resolving the budget deficit.

Pending:

Reid amendment No. 529, to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 530 (to amendment No. 529), of a perfecting nature.

Reid motion to commit the bill to the Committee on Finance, with instructions, Reid amendment No. 531, of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 532 (to the instructions (amendment No. 531) of the motion to commit), of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 533 (to amendment No. 532), of a perfecting nature.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there

will be 1 hour of debate equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I rise to speak in morning business.

I wish to thank my colleague, the Democratic majority leader, for his opening remarks. He and I have been given an assignment of going to the White House each day to sit down with the leaders—Democratic and Republican leaders in the House and the Senate, as well as the President, Vice President, Secretary of the Treasury, and leaders in the President's staff—to deal with this pending crisis over the debt ceiling limit.

On August 2, we are required to extend the debt ceiling of the United States of America. It is an interesting exercise which usually goes unnoticed.

Senator JEFF BINGAMAN from New Mexico presented to us yesterday a history of the debt ceiling. I was glad to learn a little bit more. In 1939, we passed a law which said we could extend the debt ceiling of the United States as needed, rather than have congressional approval of every bond issued by the Government of the United States. It made it a much more efficient way for the government to operate. As Senator REID said earlier, since 1939, we have extended the debt ceiling 89 times, and on most every occasion it has gone unnoticed because the United States has quickly extended its debt ceiling and kept its credit rating in the eyes of the world because of our timeliness. There was only one exception—a technical lapse that led to perhaps an increase in costs of government for just a brief time—but by and large, on 88 occasions this was done without any fanfare or notice.

It is interesting to look at the Presidents who extended the debt ceiling. The alltime recordbreaker when it comes to extending the debt ceiling was Ronald Reagan, who extended the debt ceiling 18 times in a matter of 8 years. So more than twice a year, Congress was extending the debt ceiling as our national debt increased dramatically under President Reagan. The same thing happened under President Bush. He holds the record—the second highest record, I believe—with eight or nine extensions of the debt in his 8-year tenure as President. On both occasions, under President Reagan and under President George W. Bush, the debt of the United States increased dramatically.

As Senator REID said earlier, under President George W. Bush, the debt of the United States of America in 8 years nearly doubled. In fact, some say it more than doubled. This was a period of time when we were doing things that, frankly, cost us a lot of money in terms of our national expenditures.

President George W. Bush waged two wars without paying for them. When we do that, of course, the cost of the war is added to the Nation's debt. President George W. Bush also did

something no President had ever done: He cut taxes on American taxpayers in the midst of a war. Most Presidents understand we have to do just the opposite—we have to raise more money to wage a war because we have the ordinary costs of government that have to be met as well. So the idea of cutting taxes in the midst of a war added even more to the deficit under President George W. Bush. Then he had this theory that there were major programs we could enact and not pay for, such as Medicare prescription Part D.

All of these things accumulated together with the basic philosophy of the Republican Party that if we just keep cutting taxes, the economy will get well. It didn't happen. Just the opposite occurred. When President George W. Bush took office, our Nation's budget was in surplus. When he left office, it faced the largest deficit in its history. Instead of giving President Obama a positive economy when President Obama was sworn in as President, we were losing hundreds of thousands of jobs each month. Now we face a deadline of August 2 on whether we extend the debt ceiling.

I see the Republican leader has come to the floor. I commend him for what I consider to be a positive and thoughtful response. He understands, as most all of us do, that extending the debt ceiling is essential for the economy of the United States and for our recovery from this recession. I asked my staff what would happen—what would happen if we defaulted on our debt ceiling and didn't pay and interest rates went up 1 percent. They are around 2.8 percent, 2.9 percent now.

What if interest rates went up 1 percent because of this self-inflicted wound of a failure to extend the debt ceiling? The consequences are real, and not just for the government but for families and businesses across America. A 1-percent increase in the interest rate, if we would default and not extend our debt ceiling—here is what the Third Way reports: Treasury rates, if it increased 1 percent, would cause deficits to increase by \$20 billion in the first year and by \$150 billion in the out-years. In other words, the debt of the United States would increase by a dramatic amount.

Increased Treasury rates would cause the gross domestic product; that is, the economic activity of America, the sum total of our goods and services, to decrease by 1 percent, according to J.P. Morgan. That would cause the U.S. economy to lose 640,000 jobs. At a time when we are losing jobs in the public sector but gaining them in the private sector, the failure to extend the debt ceiling would, in fact, increase unemployment in America.

J.P. Morgan predicts that a 1-percent increase would cause a stock market loss of 9 percent. What does that mean to the savings and 401(k) plans of American families? They would lose, on average, \$8,816—something no family would like to see. And raising mort-

gage rates by 1 percent would cause the typical mortgage to increase by somewhere in the range of \$38,000—\$38,000 in payments that need to be made.

So why would we inflict this wound on ourselves? As we sit with the President and try to find our way through this crisis, we should understand that as the business leaders reported to us yesterday, this would be a disaster—a self-imposed disaster, a failure of political leadership.

The President has called us together, and he has said: You are going to meet every single day until we get it done. That determination by the President is keeping us at the table and focusing us on the mission at hand.

I will tell you, I believe we can reduce this deficit if we are honest about the spending in Washington. To focus only on domestic discretionary spending—a part of the budget that has not increased in real dollar terms in the last 10 years—and to ignore the costs that are growing on the security side, the defense side, as well as the cost of entitlement programs, is not only being blinded to reality, it really means the cuts that are made in domestic discretionary spending are outrageously deep.

What we need to do, what the Bowles-Simpson commission told us needed to be done was painful but necessary: Put everything on the table—everything on the table. That means all spending, all entitlements, and revenue.

I find it hard to understand the Republican position that says we can impose new obligations on the families of children going to college to pay more for student loans but we cannot impose any additional burden on the wealthiest people in America to pay more taxes. To think that the George Bush tax cuts means that for a person making \$1 million in income each year—that is \$20,000 a week in income—to think that George Bush tax cut is worth \$200,000 a year in tax cuts for a millionaire and that we would blithely hear from the other side that we should allow that to continue while asking everyone else in America to sacrifice is upside down.

It is instructive to me that, when asked, people across America believe we should put everything on the table, including taxes and revenue. We can do this.

The argument that this is the wrong time to raise taxes on anybody because of the state of the economy is not borne out by history. Whenever taxes have been increased in recent times, we have seen the opposite occur. If they are increased in a thoughtful way—not imposed on working and middle-income families and lower income groups—in fact, we have seen in the past that the economy has grown. It has not stopped us from growing.

We now have a top income tax rate of 35 percent. When it was over 39 percent under President Clinton, we had the fastest and most dynamic growth in

our economy in modern time. There is no linkage between taxes on the wealthy and the growth of our economy other than the exact opposite of the Republican argument. Where taxes have been raised on higher income groups, we have actually seen our economy expand time and time and time again.

So I would hope we would have a balanced approach to dealing with this deficit and put everything on the table. I would hope that as we meet with the President, we get the job done. And we ought to do it soon. The longer we wait, the more the uncertainty, and it is not good for our economy in a world where we have a volatile economic situation, particularly in Europe. It is not good for job growth, where we know we desperately need to create more good-paying jobs right here in America. And it is certainly not good for our reputation in Congress. We were elected to lead, to make hard decisions. We have that opportunity, and we need to do it now.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, yesterday morning I came to the floor to announce my conclusion that, despite his repeated claims to the contrary, the President has no real intention of cutting spending or dealing with our deficits and debt. It has been my fervent hope that the President could be persuaded to view the upcoming debt limit vote as an opportunity—an opportunity—to change direction, to cut spending, to cut debt, and to preserve entitlement programs. But those hopes have evaporated as the President began to insist in recent weeks that he would only consider spending cuts later if Republicans agreed now to one of the biggest tax hikes in history. Republicans refused to be drawn into this legislative trap.

When Democrats proposed a smaller plan that they claimed, without any details, amounted to more than \$1 trillion in cuts, we refused to go along again because we knew that it really did not cut \$1 trillion. We refused to pretend that a bad idea was a good one. Our bottom line is this: The White House would have to prove that the cuts it was claiming to support were real and enforceable before Republicans would sign off on any plan to endorse them.

As it turned out, our skepticism was well founded.

Earlier this week, I asked an administration official point blank what the cuts they were proposing as part of their so-called bipartisan deal would amount to next year; that is, year 2012. He said they were talking about a \$2 billion reduction—\$2 billion—for next year. We will borrow more than \$4 billion today. That, Madam President, is not a deal in which I am particularly

interested. This is what they were planning to spin as more than \$1 trillion over 10 years. It was at that point that I realized the White House simply was not serious about cutting spending or debt. The only thing they were serious about was putting together a plan that appeared serious but really was not, and they wanted Republicans to go along with it. Well, we are not interested in playing that game.

In the end, the White House gave us three choices in exchange for a vote to increase the debt limit: a massive tax hike, smoke and mirrors, or default. And none of these options is acceptable. So yesterday I proposed a possible fourth option as a last resort if the President continues to shirk his duty to do something about our dire fiscal situation. If the White House continues to insist on either tax hikes or default, then we would send legislation to the President that requires him to propose spending cuts greater than the debt limit he requests; make the President show in black and white the specific cuts he claims to support. If he refuses, he will have to raise the debt ceiling on his own. But he is not going to get Republicans to go along with that. That way, the President cannot pretend to support cuts when he does not. He is forced to simply put up.

I understand the reluctance the American people have in concluding that a serious solution is not going to happen. I hope I am wrong. The idea of not doing something serious about the debt before August, frankly, sickens me. Like most Americans, I previously did not believe anyone in this country could seriously deny the need to rein in government spending. Like most Americans, I previously did not believe anyone could be so shortsighted as to propose massive tax hikes in a weakened economy. Like all of you, I did not think even the most liberal among us would go to such lengths to protect the expansion of government. I am sorry to report there are people who believe all of those things, and they currently reside right down at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. But Republicans refuse to let the President use the threat of a debt limit deadline to get us to cave on tax increases or on phony spending cuts that future Congresses could just as easily reverse with a single vote. We are not gambling our Nation's fiscal future on the promise of spending cuts tomorrow for tax hikes today.

It is time to change the conversation altogether. It is time to refocus this debate on the kinds of real cuts and debt reduction Americans are demanding of us. It is time to show there are two different versions of our Nation's future at work here. So over the next several days, Republicans will redouble our efforts to avoid all four scenarios. Americans do not want tax hikes, they do not want phony spending cuts, they do not want a debt disapproval plan, and they do not want us to default on our debts. They want real cuts and real reforms now, and that is what Repub-

licans will spend the next 2 weeks fighting for—the one thing that will ensure that Washington gets its house in order and forces future Congresses to live within their means.

The time has come for a balanced budget amendment that forces Washington to balance its books. If these debt negotiations have convinced us of anything, it is that we cannot leave it to politicians in Washington to make the difficult decisions they need to get our fiscal house in order. The balanced budget amendment will do that for them. Now is the moment. No more games. No more gimmicks. The Constitution must be amended to keep the government in check. We have tried persuasion. We have tried negotiations. We have tried elections. Nothing has worked. If the President will not do something about the debt, we will go around him and take it to the American people. We will have a real debate. Those who support endless spending and debt will vote against it. It is time we all stand up to be counted.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I thank the Republican leader for his efforts in this regard. I know for a fact that Senator MCCONNELL and the leadership on our side hoped and believed it was possible to take advantage of the opportunity of the discussion over raising the debt limit to create a major alteration in our plan of spending in this country. It has been disappointing to not have been met halfway in that regard.

When Senator MCCONNELL was told the White House's plan included only a \$2 billion cut next year in spending, I found it stunning. Our deficit this fiscal year will have added \$1,500 billion to our debt. We are going to save \$2 billion next year? This is not acceptable, and I am disappointed. I appreciate the Republican leader's efforts in that regard.

I would note, as to the discussion about that the war is causing our deficit, it has been expensive over 10 years. The war on terrorism, Iraq, and Afghanistan together have cost about \$1.5 trillion. This next year, we are projecting a little over \$100 billion to be spent. So I will just say that the amount of the deficit this one year will equal the cost of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars over 10 years. The deficit this year is \$1,500 billion. The cost of the war this year is about \$150 billion. It is about 10 percent of the deficit we are running this year. Although we hope to bring those numbers down and are already projecting next year those numbers to come down to closer to \$100 billion from \$150 billion, the cause of our deficit is not the war. It represents about 10 percent of the total deficit we are running this year. That is just a fact. That is what the numbers show.

One of the few things mandated for Congress to do every year is to pass a budget. According to the Congressional

Budget Act, contained in the U.S. Code, signed into law in 1974, the Senate Budget Committee must produce a budget resolution by April 1 and adopt a conference agreement on that budget by April 15. Furthermore, a budget must include total levels of spending, expected revenue, and deficits for no less than 5 years, and frequently we do 10-year budgets.

Once a budget is in place, Congress is prohibited from passing legislation with spending that exceeds the levels that were in the budget—sort of like we do in our homes. In essence, a budget is both a concrete plan for the future, and an enforcement mechanism to help us stay within the limits we set, and to ensure honest accounting.

One of these enforcement mechanisms in the Budget Act as set forth in the code is a prohibition against the consideration of any appropriations bills in the absence of a budget. We should not move forward with spending bills until we have established a budget. How simple is that? That is why we are supposed to have it done by April 15, because the appropriations bills come along afterwards.

This is the essence of good government. We should not spend taxpayer dollars without a plan for how to officially allocate the dollars and in a way that maximizes the effectiveness of our spending and minimizes waste and abuse and fraud. We have too much of that in our government.

This point of order—and there is a point of order in the code—contained in section 303(c) of the Congressional Budget Act, once that point of order is raised, the legislation in question cannot move forward unless a majority of the Senators vote to waive the budget requirement that taxpayer money should not be appropriated without a budget—without a plan.

This is what the law dictates. I believe this is our responsibility as legislators and as Senators. This is what the organizational structure of this very Senate requires, and this is the duty the Democrat-led Senate has refused to fulfill for 805 days. Senate Democrats have failed to adopt a budget in more than 2 years, and this year they have refused to even produce a budget for public review. They claim they have one. They claim it does some good things, and they leak portions of it to the public and spin it as being a positive document. But when asked to produce it, they do not do so. When asked to have hearings on it, they do not do so.

If they are proud of it, if it will sustain public scrutiny, why do they not bring it forward? I have never imagined that I would serve 2 years in the Senate and now be ranking member of the Budget Committee, and we would not have a budget even presented. Today we are scheduled to vote on a motion to proceed to the Military Construction appropriations bill for fiscal year 2012, beginning October 1 of this year.

Regardless of my feelings about the legislation or my high admiration for

those who have worked on it, I think I have a responsibility, a duty, as ranking member of the Budget Committee during this time of extreme fiscal danger, the greatest debt we have ever seen, to oppose cloture on this measure and to raise the 303(c) point of order should cloture be invoked.

My objection does not mean I do not support the bill. To any who would suggest otherwise, let me say that this action is at its core a defense of our men and women in uniform. No one understands duty better than those who wear the uniform, and it is our duty to write a budget that sets priorities and ensures the needs of our troops are met. The military is a priority of the highest order. To protect that priority, we must have a budget, especially in these challenging economic times.

The Senate has failed those in uniform if it chooses political expedience over drafting a budget that includes a military spending plan. How can we protect the military from unwise cuts if spending plans are not even made public?

The only area of government significantly cut in the unseen Democratic budget proposal that I have referred to previously—that I have called a “phantom budget”—appears to be the Pentagon’s.

If we take the numbers that were leaked from their budget plan, it calls for \$900 billion in cuts to the Pentagon, to the government, to the military. Well, if this is their plan we ought to know it. So I do not want to hear people say that I am objecting to the Military Construction bill because I do not appreciate the military, while the Democratic majority, who is producing this Military Construction bill, claim they have a budget that hammers the Defense Department by \$900 billion.

Indeed, while that appears to be the plan, the budget submitted by President Obama earlier this year—not one produced by the Senate Democrats but the President’s own budget—calls for a 9.5-percent increase in the Energy Department, a 10.5-percent increase for the Education Department, a 10.5-percent increase for the State Department, and a 60-percent increase for high-speed rail and the Transportation budget without money to fund it.

While they are proposing major cuts in defense, we have major plans on the table to increase spending next year when we are, again, going to run a \$1 trillion-plus deficit. The authors of the Congressional Budget Act likely did not contemplate a future in which the governing party believes budgets are no longer necessary. That seems to be the case today. That is why I am also bringing forward legislation that will raise a 303(c) point of order threshold to 60 votes—no appropriations without a budget unless 60 Senators choose to waive that requirement. That is in the law.

We sometimes put requirements in the law. We do not have very good enforcement mechanisms. The danger we

face from continuing to operate this government without a clear, concrete budget is simply too great. Admiral Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, warned that our Nation’s debt is the gravest of all national security threats we face. It is so. We are reaching a point where our economy could enter into a financial crisis as a result of our national debt.

We owe it to the extraordinary men and women who serve this country to defend at home the way of life they have defended abroad. That means the Senate must confront the debt problem that threatens us with economic disaster. Already, as economists Rogoff and Reinhart demonstrated, we are losing at least 1 million jobs a year as a result of our high debt, which is now 95 percent of GDP and soon to be 100 percent of GDP.

In just a little over 2 months our Nation’s gross debt will be as large as our entire economy and growing larger. This year we will take in \$2.2 trillion, but we will spend \$3.7 trillion. By the end of the first 3 years of the Obama administration, we will have accumulated \$5 trillion in gross debt—new debt.

Over the next 10 years we are projected to spend \$46 trillion, adding another \$13 trillion to our national debt. That is 13,000 billion. The President proposed saving \$2 billion next year. He proposes we increase taxes on corporate jets that over 10 years would save \$3 billion, while he has a budget submitted to the Senate that would increase the debt by \$13,000 billion over the next 10 years.

I do not defend corporate jets. We can eliminate that as far as I am concerned and change our whole tax structure, which needs simplifying and more integrity and more effectiveness in it. But that is not a responsible way for a leader to suggest that we are going to fix our debt problems—by changing the corporate tax rate for jets. No nation can sustain this level of debt, nor can any nation ever raise enough taxes to cover this level of spending. The course we are on is not merely unsustainable, it is unimaginable. The American people have every right to be angry with their Congress. We are sitting here running a government and borrowing 40 cents of every dollar we spend. They should be furious with us. It is unacceptable. It is unexplainable.

We spend and borrow all we can. That is the fact. There is only one sound answer: control spending and grow the economy, not tax it into submission. For Americans to regain prosperity, Washington must regain discipline. Hiking taxes to bail out the Washington spenders who have put us in debt by increasing domestic nondefense spending in the last 2 years—not war, not Social Security, I am talking about general expenditures of our government have gone up 24 percent in the last 2 years. They have run up huge debts, and now they want the American people to pay more so they can con-

tinue to spend at this irresponsible level. I say no to that. I am not for that.

Since the Democratic-led Senate last passed a budget, we have spent \$7.3 trillion and increased the debt by \$3.2 trillion. When President Obama took office the public debt of the United States was about \$5.7 trillion. In 3 years we have added close to \$4 trillion in debt. In 4 years President Obama’s debt that he will have run up at this rate will be larger than the debt that has been accumulated in the entire history of America.

We are on an unsustainable course. This fiscal abandon has brought us to the brink of the debt ceiling that we have. We have a limit on how much debt we can run up statutorily. Yet, still, the Senate Democrats will not produce a budget, and the White House will not put together an honest plan with real spending cuts that they will stand behind and let people analyze and score. Just more gimmicks, tricks, and games. That is not acceptable. That is why we are in this fix today.

Majority Leader REID actually declared it would be “foolish” to have a budget—“foolish” to have a budget. Would you tell a family who is having difficulty with their finances it is foolish to have a budget? Would you declare to a family who is running up credit card debt and 40 percent of what they are spending is put on a credit card every month that they should not have a budget?

The United States Code requires us to have a budget by April 15. It is easy to claim deficit reduction as a priority, but if our leaders were actually to put a plan on paper it would become all too clear that their real desire is for larger taxes and only meager cuts to spending. That is the truth. That will not get the job done. Numbers do not lie. Their rhetoric creates the appearance of savings, but those savings do not exist when you look at the numbers carefully.

But while the White House and Senate Democrats may think their strategy is clever, I do not think the American people should be amused. I do not think the American people are amused. Until the majority, who asked for the responsibility to lead this Senate—that is what they wanted. They have it. Until they allow this Chamber to adopt a badly needed budget, I am going to continue to raise points of order on appropriations bills.

Now more than ever, we should fulfill our legal duties, not shirk them. More than ever today we should. We were not elected to preside over the financial decline of this country. We were not elected to shut down the committees, deny them the right to function, to shut down debate or cede our constitutional responsibility to secret meetings and closed-door proceedings.

The debt limit is not only about fulfilling our obligation to creditors, it is about fulfilling our obligation to the all of the people we serve, good Americans. We owe them a Senate that

works, that works openly and tirelessly on their behalf, which casts votes on these important matters and has to respond and be accountable to the American people. We owe the people an honest, competent, limited, efficient government. We owe them a Senate that is worthy of their faith and trust.

We are not there. We are not fulfilling that responsibility. Therefore, I expect that I will object and raise a budget point of order against movement to the Military Construction bill.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Dakota is recognized.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I want to echo some of the remarks made by my colleague from Alabama regarding a budget. He is the ranking Republican member on our side on the Budget Committee.

It is ironic that we are on the floor of the Senate this week, as we were last week, debating a nonbinding sense-of-the-Senate bill that states "those earning \$1 million or more per year make a more meaningful contribution to the deficit reduction effort."

It doesn't specify what that is. It doesn't say there should be tax increases or spending cuts that should have an impact on these high-income earners. I echo what was stated by my colleague, which is that this is no substitute for a budget. Congress's job is to pass a budget. That is why we are here. That is why the taxpayers elected us. It is to set priorities and make decisions about where we are going to allocate their hard-earned tax dollars.

The Democrats have not passed a budget for 805 days. Now, this sense-of-the-Senate bill—which is vague, ambiguous, and meaningless—does not do anything to address the fiscal challenges our country faces or achieve any level of budgetary savings.

Mr. SESSIONS. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. THUNE. I am happy to yield for a question.

Mr. SESSIONS. The Senator from South Dakota is an experienced member of the Budget Committee and a member of the leadership on the Republican side in the Senate. Isn't it true that we had more interest from Members wanting to join the Budget Committee this year, particularly new Members who had gotten elected and talked to their constituents about their fear of America's debt and they wanted to be on the Budget Committee, and only a few could be selected out of the group who wanted to be on it?

What has been the Senator's observation as to how they have reacted to the fact that no budget has been presented; that the committee has never met or even marked up and held hearings as the United States Code requires? Maybe the Senator can share how they feel about this.

Mr. THUNE. My colleague is absolutely right. There was tremendous in-

terest this year. If we look at the last election, the 2010 election, a lot of the people who were elected in the House and Senate were elected because they ran on a message to their constituents of getting America's fiscal house in order, getting spending and debt under control.

Where does that start? It starts with a budget. So they got here and tried to get on the Senate Budget Committee. We have all these bright new Members of the Senate who have a lot to contribute and who have had no opportunity to do that because we haven't had a budget, a markup, and we haven't done the necessary things in order to move the budget process forward.

I am completely in agreement with the Senator from Alabama when it comes to what the priorities should be. It ought to be doing a budget that actually focuses on cutting spending and getting this debt under control.

I tried to offer an amendment to this nonbinding sense-of-the-Senate bill, but the majority is blocking amendments. That amendment would cut all nonsecurity discretionary spending for the current fiscal year by 2.5 percent. It is a nominal amount, I recognize that. It is not a big spending cut. It is a small haircut. It will not solve our problem. It would produce about \$11 billion in savings from some of these accounts that have seen, as the Senator noted, extraordinary growth since 2008.

Spending has increased in the discretionary part of the budget by 24 percent in 2 years, when inflation was about 2 percent. The government was spending at a rate of 10 or 12 times the right of inflation. It is unsustainable.

We cannot argue to the American people with a straight face that that is the kind of spending that ought to be going on in Washington, DC. Because the amendments have been blocked, we are probably not going to have a chance to vote on that. But the amendment says: Let's cut by 2.5 percent the discretionary spending, given the fact that it has increased 24 percent in the last 2 years.

These accounts started to feel downward pressure when the continuing resolution passed earlier this year, but more needs to be done. We need to put pressure on the spending side of the equation, not the tax side. All of my Republican colleagues have said it multiple times, but I think it bears repeating and explaining that our problem in Washington isn't that Washington taxes too little; it is that it spends too much. That is true.

Revenues are below their historical average, but spending is dramatically higher than its historical average. The reason we have revenues that are lower than the historical average is because we have an anemic economic recovery. If we get the economy growing and expanding and creating jobs again, we will start to see some of the tax revenue pick up. Just as a point of fact, in

2006 and 2007, we had a very similar income tax system to what we have today. At that time it raised more revenue than our historical average. Our historical average is around 18 percent of our entire economy—what we raise in tax revenues. In 2006 and 2007, in the Tax Code, the rates were similar to today. We have exceeded the average.

The issue is not that we have too little revenue in Washington, not that Washington taxes too little; it spends too much. Once the economy starts to turn around, we know we are going to be raising a substantial and sufficient amount of revenue without having to resort to tax increases. In fact, if we were to enact tax reform that was revenue neutral—and by that I mean it doesn't generate more revenue for Washington to spend—but if we were to lower the rates on people and businesses and broaden the tax base, our economy would grow and expand dramatically, and we would see even more revenue generated for the Federal Government and more jobs created, which is what everybody wants to see. We should not, however, simply increase taxes to pay for ever-increasing spending for programs that aren't sustainable.

This year Federal government spending will comprise 24.3 percent of our Nation's entire economic output. So almost a quarter of every dollar spent in this country will be spent by the Federal Government. That doesn't take into consideration spending by State and local governments. But it is 18 percent more than our historical average. We spend about 20.6 percent, historically, of our entire economy on the Federal Government. This year it is 24.3 percent. We are almost at a quarter out of every dollar being spent by our Federal Government in Washington, DC.

What happens? That means there is less activity in the private economy, which is where the real jobs are created. When the Federal Government is spending this much and borrowing this much, it crowds out private investment and makes it difficult for the private economy to create jobs that are permanent, good-paying jobs for the people of this country.

Perhaps an even more pertinent statistic is the years in which our budget has been balanced since 1969. These budgets were balanced because spending was constrained. If we look at the 5 years when the budget was balanced, the Federal Government's spending in those 5 years comprises just under 18.7 percent of our GDP, our economic output. So if we look at the problem that we are trying to diagnose in this country, our colleagues on the other side diagnose it as a revenue problem. I submit that the problem we are trying to solve is fundamentally a spending problem. Five times, when the budget was balanced since 1969, in every instance it was because we were spending less than the historical average.

This year's spending is over 30 percent more than the years in which we

balanced the budget; that is, as a percentage of our entire economy. That is how much higher it is than the years in which we balanced our budget. That is how much and how fast government spending is growing. Unfortunately, it remains above the historical average every year in the President's budget. He submitted a budget that borrows more, spends more, and taxes more. I can't think of a worse way to get out of an economic downturn and start creating jobs than to continue to spend at this uncontrollable rate, to continue to borrow more and more money, and impose higher taxes on an American economy that is already struggling.

After 2018, according to the President's budget, spending increases every single year. That is a spending problem; that is not a revenue problem. Despite that, the administration wants to take what they call a "balanced approach" and to have shared sacrifice.

Only in Washington, DC, would spending more and taxing more be considered a balanced approach. Only in Washington would shared sacrifice mean taking more of taxpayers' hard-earned money to spend on the administration's priorities.

To put a fine point on that, this week, the President said he would "rather be talking about things that everyone wants, like new programs." This is code for: I need more of your money so I can spend more.

I reject that notion. We don't need more spending in Washington, DC. We don't need more programs. We don't need to expand government. Government is too big already, at 25 percent of our entire economy.

Let's pretend for a minute that deficit reduction really was the President's priority. What has happened in the past with these "balanced budget" deals? In 1990 the budget agreement reached by President Bush at Andrews Air Force Base was supposed to have spending cuts that outnumbered tax increases by a 2-to-1 margin. Spending was supposed to be cut by \$274 billion, and taxes were going to be increased by \$137 billion.

What actually happened? Tax hikes certainly materialized, but the reality is that spending actually increased. So in the 1990 "balanced" budget approach, we got increased spending and increased taxes. In 1982, under President Reagan, the exact same thing happened.

Madam President, I simply say to my colleagues that this is fundamentally a debate about the size of our government. We believe in a debt crisis we ought to make government smaller, not larger, and not create more programs. Our colleagues on the other side have a different view. We ought to be talking about what we can do to get people in this country back to work and small businesses hiring.

There was a Chamber of Commerce survey that said 64 percent of small businesses will not add to their payrolls this year, and 12 percent will cut

jobs. Why? Because of the economic uncertainty created in Washington and because we are unwilling to deal with the spending and debt issue that is in front of us and to put policies into place that will enable job creation and economic growth.

I hope my colleagues will work with us to reduce the size of government, not grow it.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, how much time remains?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. On the Democratic side, 15 minutes remains, and there is no time on the Republican side.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I rise to speak about the budget and deficit issues that are facing us. The first point, which is becoming clearer and clearer to the American people, is how bad a default would be.

The bottom line is very simple: America has never defaulted on its debt—nor should any country, particularly the greatest country in the world—debt that is a promise of expenditures that have already been made. When we raise the debt ceiling, we are simply saying we are going to pay our bills.

The bottom line is that every family in America has to do that. If you own a mortgage, you can't say, after you have signed the mortgage and lived in the house: I am not going to pay my mortgage unless ABC happens.

If you have credit card debt and you have incurred significant debt, you can't say to the credit card company: I am not going to pay that debt unless you do ABC.

Yet some of our colleagues on the other side—and particularly in the House of Representatives—seem to say that. It would lead to disaster. It would lead to disaster for the government. In August America has \$306 billion—this government, this Federal Government, has \$306 billion in obligations and \$172 billion in income. If we don't raise the debt ceiling, we are going to have awful choices: Do we pay the Social Security recipients and not the veterans? Do we pay the veterans and not those to whom we owe money? Do we say we will pay veterans but not pay people who inspect food or guard our borders? The choices are awful, and choices the American people should not have foisted on them by an irresponsible Congress that says we will not raise the debt ceiling.

It will also hurt American homeowners and debtors. If you are a mortgagor, your debt will go up. If you have a variable-rate mortgage, and we don't raise the debt ceiling, you will pay perhaps hundreds of dollars more each month. If you have credit card debt, which most Americans have, the rates are likely to go up.

Overall, at a time when we need jobs and the economy is so precarious, it could send us back into a recession and

perhaps even worse, according to some economists. So not raising the debt ceiling and defaulting on our debt is not an option.

Yesterday, Senator MCCONNELL realized that. The substantive good news here is that the plan MITCH MCCONNELL offered, for all its faults, makes the likelihood of our not paying our bills, of not raising the debt ceiling less likely. However, the plan has a good deal of fault to it. It seems to be a political document. It says what we care most about is two things: It says we want to throw the responsibility of raising the debt ceiling to the other side, and it says the Republican Party cares more about preserving tax breaks for the wealthy and corporate America than actually bringing down our debt.

All the talk about deficit reduction, all the talk about getting a handle on our debt has been thrown to the wind, all in an effort to say: We know if we raise the debt ceiling there will be trouble. Senator MCCONNELL is well aware—he is very smart when it comes to the politics of it—that had the debt ceiling not been raised, the blame would have fallen on the party that has been saying they don't care about raising the debt ceiling.

Hundreds of members of the Republican Party throughout the country—scores in this Congress both in this House and the other—have said: We are not going to raise the debt ceiling. Senator MCCONNELL, realizing the consequences of doing that would fall on the party that doesn't believe it is important to do so, had to act. But at the end of the day, where is the debt reduction? Where is the deficit reduction we have heard about in speech after speech after speech from the other side?

The bottom line is very simple: Again, when President Obama offered a plan that would remove tax breaks from the rich, that would close corporate loopholes, the other side said: We can't tolerate that, even if it means debt reduction. The McConnell plan shows what the other party, the other side of the aisle, cares about: preserving tax breaks for the rich and preserving corporate loopholes much more than reducing our deficit and bringing down our debt.

Having said that, as I said, Senator MCCONNELL has at least recognized, even if partially politically, the gravity of the situation, and he joins the other leaders in Washington in doing that. President Obama has as well, and that is why he put out his \$4 trillion plan. Speaker BOEHNER has also. That is why he was willing to entertain—until the rug was pulled out from under him—a big plan. Leader REID and Leader PELOSI have constantly talked about their views and ways we can reduce the deficit and avoid default. There is only one person who hasn't come up with a plan, who hasn't compromised, and who hasn't reached out to the other side in an effort to move forward, and that is the majority leader in the House, Mr. CANTOR. He is the only one

who still says: My way or the highway. Every other leader has said they are willing to make certain concessions—even though they do not like them—to avoid default.

The Nation, and, of course, this Congress is waiting for Leader CANTOR to step to the plate in a similar way so that maybe we can come to a compromise that actually avoids default and, at the same time, gets a handle on the debt and deficit problems and reduces both of those.

Madam President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Madam President, I know we have a vote that is coming up momentarily, but I just wanted to say my wish for those folks who are huddling up down at the White House every day: Don't miss this opportunity for a grand bargain to do something serious about deficit reduction. That is why I am concerned about Senator MCCONNELL's proposal because it would take us off that practice.

When they look at that real opportunity for \$4 trillion of deficit reduction, they ought to look at the proposal of the Senate Budget Committee—\$4 trillion, \$2 trillion of which over 10 years comes out of the \$14 trillion of the tax expenditures—or tax preferences that special interests have. We would only have to take from 9 to 17 percent of all that \$14 trillion of tax preferences in order to produce the \$2 trillion of revenue over 10 years.

I have just put that issue to a panel of experts in a joint Ways and Means-Finance Committee meeting as to what they would recommend, and I will talk about that later today.

With that, I yield the floor.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that all time be yielded back.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the motion to invoke cloture.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on S. 1323, a bill to express the sense of the Senate on shared sacrifice in resolving the budget deficit.

Harry Reid, Richard J. Durbin, Patty Murray, Daniel K. Inouye, Christopher A. Coons, Sheldon Whitehouse, Barbara Boxer, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Bernard Sanders, Frank R. Lautenberg, Sherrod Brown, Jack Reed, Dianne Feinstein, Jeff Merkley, Benjamin L. Cardin, Carl Levin, Charles E. Schumer.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on S. 1323, a bill to express the sense of the Senate on shared sacrifice in resolving the budget deficit, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 49, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 108 Leg.]

YEAS—51

Akaka	Gillibrand	Mikulski
Baucus	Hagan	Murray
Begich	Harkin	Nelson (FL)
Bennet	Inouye	Reed
Bingaman	Johnson (SD)	Reid
Blumenthal	Kerry	Rockefeller
Boxer	Klobuchar	Sanders
Brown (OH)	Kohl	Schumer
Cantwell	Landrieu	Shaheen
Cardin	Lautenberg	Stabenow
Carper	Leahy	Tester
Casey	Levin	Udall (CO)
Conrad	Lieberman	Udall (NM)
Coons	Manchin	Warner
Durbin	McCaskill	Webb
Feinstein	Menendez	Whitehouse
Franken	Merkley	Wyden

NAYS—49

Alexander	Graham	Murkowski
Ayotte	Grassley	Nelson (NE)
Barrasso	Hatch	Paul
Blunt	Heller	Portman
Boozman	Hoeven	Pryor
Brown (MA)	Hutchison	Risch
Burr	Inhofe	Roberts
Chambliss	Isakson	Rubio
Coats	Johanns	Sessions
Coburn	Johnson (WI)	Shelby
Cochran	Kirk	Snowe
Collins	Kyl	Thune
Corker	Lee	Toomey
Cornyn	Lugar	Vitter
Crapo	McCain	Wicker
DeMint	McConnell	
Enzi	Moran	

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. On this vote, the yeas are 51, the nays are 49. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2012—MOTION TO PROCEED

CLOTURE MOTION

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 91, H.R. 2055, an act making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2012, and for other purposes.

Harry Reid, Richard J. Durbin, Patty Murray, Daniel K. Inouye, Christopher

A. Coons, Sheldon Whitehouse, Barbara Boxer, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Tim Johnson, Frank R. Lautenberg, Sherrod Brown, Jack Reed, Dianne Feinstein, Jeff Merkley, Benjamin L. Cardin, Mark L. Pryor, Carl Levin, Charles E. Schumer.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to H.R. 2055, an act making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2012, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 89, nays 11, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 109 Leg.]

YEAS—89

Akaka	Franken	Merkley
Alexander	Gillibrand	Mikulski
Ayotte	Graham	Moran
Barrasso	Hagan	Murkowski
Baucus	Harkin	Murray
Begich	Hatch	Nelson (NE)
Bennet	Heller	Nelson (FL)
Bingaman	Hoeven	Portman
Blumenthal	Hutchison	Pryor
Blunt	Inhofe	Reed
Boozman	Inouye	Reid
Boxer	Isakson	Risch
Brown (MA)	Johanns	Roberts
Brown (OH)	Johnson (SD)	Rockefeller
Burr	Kerry	Sanders
Cantwell	Kirk	Schumer
Cardin	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Carper	Kohl	Shelby
Casey	Kyl	Snowe
Chambliss	Landrieu	Stabenow
Coats	Lautenberg	Tester
Coburn	Leahy	Thune
Cochran	Levin	Udall (CO)
Collins	Lieberman	Udall (NM)
Conrad	Lugar	Warner
Coons	Manchin	Webb
Crapo	McCain	Whitehouse
Durbin	McCaskill	Wicker
Enzi	McConnell	Wyden
Feinstein	Menendez	

NAYS—11

Corker	Johnson (WI)	Sessions
Cornyn	Lee	Toomey
DeMint	Paul	Vitter
Grassley	Rubio	

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. On this vote, the yeas are 89, the nays are 11. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I would hope following the Republicans' luncheon they will allow us to move to this bill. Senator JOHNSON and staff are ready to move forward on this legislation. We would hope after the luncheon they would allow us to be on it. So it would be open for amendment. There are lots of spots open for people to offer amendments. This would be our first appropriations bill. I think it would be, especially in that we are working on these budgets, deficit-reduction programs right now here and at the White House, a good message to everybody

that we can do an appropriations bill and stay within our legislative framework as far as spending.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I also ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for—well, it will not be 20 minutes but let me ask for up to 20 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

STATE OF THE OCEAN

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, nothing is more important in the short term than resolving our debt limit impasse, and I would urge my colleagues to take Social Security out of their gun sights. It has not contributed to our debt or deficits.

I would urge my colleagues to focus not on Medicare benefit cuts but, rather, on health care system reforms that will save not only Medicare and Medicaid costs but private health care and health insurance costs as well—cost savings throughout the system. I would urge my colleagues to yield a bit on defending every tax loophole, every tax gimmick and tax preference as if they were tax hikes. They are not. They are just not. They are earmarks in the Tax Code. They are special benefits in which ordinary Americans usually do not share, and we should not put the special interests first, ahead of ordinary Americans who did not get special tax deals.

But as important as all of that is in the short term, there are some things that are more important in the long term than our debt limit, and I rise to speak about one.

In April of this year a group of scientific experts came together to discuss an issue with consequences that will influence the planet and our American society for generations to come. They met at the University of Oxford to discuss the current state, and eventual fate, of our oceans. “The ocean,” as stated in the workshop’s summary report, “is the largest ecosystem on Earth, supports us and maintains our world in a habitable condition.”

For 3 days, 27 scientists representing 18 prominent research and conservation organizations worldwide, reviewed the latest findings on ocean stressors—and in particular the consequences of multiple, combined stressors—for marine life and for the human population. The scientists found that stressors in combination magnify the negative effect of each one occurring alone.

Based on this determination, the scientists at this meeting concluded:

We have underestimated the overall risks and that the whole of marine degradation is

greater than the sum of its parts, and that degradation is now happening at a faster rate than predicted.

In short, things for the ocean are worse than we thought and getting worse faster than expected.

All too often, we take for granted the fact that our oceans feed us, support our coastal communities, and drive our tourism economies. Unfortunately, these ocean ecosystems are severely stressed, from nutrient pollution, chemical dumping, overfishing, marine debris, invasions of exotic species, warming waters and, perhaps most alarming, a drop in ocean pH to levels not seen for more than 8,000 centuries: acidification of our oceans. Individually, these stressors would be cause for concern. In combination with each other, this expert group of scientists concluded, they are driving our ocean toward the brink of a mass extinction and ecosystem collapse.

One example of the multiplier effect on marine life comes from plastic debris and toxic chemicals. Plastics make their way as trash into the ocean where they break down into small particles that are consumed by marine life, like sea turtles, sea birds, and microscopic plankton. Consumption of plastic alone becomes fatal for marine life, when they consume so much indigestible material that they stop eating all together and starve to death. But the surfaces of plastic particles also easily absorb chemical pollutants, so they amplify the load of chemical pollution on these creatures.

The levels of chemical pollution are themselves on the rise in even the most remote seas where no human development exists. Many of these chemical pollutants, like flame retardants and fluorinated compounds are poured down home sinks, or expelled as waste from industrial facilities, directly into the ocean. Plants and animals have not evolved ways to break down these new synthetic compounds, so they “bioaccumulate,” meaning they become increasingly concentrated as they are passed up the food chain, or passed in marine mammals from mothers to calves in their milk, until many of our top oceanic predators, our most majestic creatures, are now swimming toxic waste.

Another example of what the scientists call “negatively synergistic” environmental harms is the combination of destructive fishing practices, nutrient runoff, and the presence of hormone-disrupting pharmaceuticals in our wastewater on coral reefs. But now, these precious ecosystems, known as the rainforests of the sea, do not have to just contend with overfishing, nutrient, and wastewater pollution. Now the reefs, like the mangroves, salt marsh estuaries, and seagrass meadows, in their damaged and less resilient state, must also face a rapidly changing climate and its dual effects of ocean warming and acidification. Coral reefs are more likely to bleach when exposed to both increased temperature

and acidification than if they are exposed to either condition separately.

Add both conditions to pre-existing stressors, and 35 percent of the world’s reefs are classified as in a critical or threatened stage. Scientific projections indicate that without urgent action, coral reef ecosystems could be eliminated in 30–50 years.

The death and decline of coral reefs, the most diverse ecosystems on the planet, dramatically impairs the reproduction and development of hundreds of other species that call them home. When a reef ecosystem collapses and does not recover, it quickly becomes dominated by algae, and the phenomenal biodiversity once present disappears. For human society, this is accompanied by a loss of food, loss of income, and damage to the billion-dollar per year tourist industries.

The workshop report echoes the overwhelming body of peer-reviewed science and literature on climate change and carbon pollution, stating that:

Human actions have resulted in warming and acidification of the oceans and are now causing increased hypoxia (lack of oxygen). Studies of the Earth’s past indicate that these are the three symptoms . . . associated with each of the previous five mass extinctions on Earth.

We are now talking about changes whose precedents can only be found in geologic time. I have often said how we have veered outside of the bandwidth of carbon concentration that has prevailed for 800,000 years. This comparison is to mass ocean extinction events 55 and 251 million years ago. Back then, the rates of carbon entering the atmosphere in the lead-up to these extinctions are estimated to be 2.2 and 1.2 gigatons of carbon per year, respectively, over several thousand years. But, as this new report identifies, “Both these estimates are dwarfed in comparison to today’s emissions of roughly 30 Gt of CO₂ per year.” Such a massive dumping of carbon pollution into our atmosphere creates the prospect of devastating damage to our oceans.

And, in fact, we may already be witnessing this devastation. In one breathtaking part of the report, the scientists remark that, “The speeds of many negative changes to the ocean are near to or are tracking the worst-case scenarios from the IPCC and other predictions.” The IPCC, or Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, created several scenarios predicting how the Earth’s natural systems could respond to ever-increasing amounts of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. This report says observations are worse than the IPCC’s worst case scenarios. The predictions of the IPCC have received a lot of special-interest-sponsored mockery on this floor, but these are not predictions now, they are observations. For instance, the decrease in Arctic Sea ice cover and the melting of the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets, which hold enough water to

raise sea levels by more than 200 ft, are actually occurring, and faster than expected. Correspondingly, sea levels are rising.

Likewise, the report observes that “acidification is occurring faster than in the past 55 million years, and with the added man-made stressors of over-fishing and pollution undermining ocean resilience.”

These observations should be sobering. Not only are the changes great, but they are happening so quickly that marine life cannot adapt.

Numerically, the average ocean pH has decreased from 8.2 to 8.1 since the industrialized revolution. This seems like a small change, but the pH scale is logarithmic, so the change is profound. If that same amount of change in pH occurred in our blood, we could suffer respiratory or kidney failure. It is not difficult to imagine how this change has huge consequences for marine life and especially the calcifying organisms, like coral reefs, shellfish, and plankton, which are increasingly becoming soluble in their environment as it becomes increasingly acidic. If this unprecedented rate of change in ocean pH continues it could mean an almost 200 percent decrease by mid century. It is not an exaggeration to say that we are on the verge of an ecosystem collapse that we could see happen in a single generation.

Though mass extinction events have occurred in the past, workshop participants state that, “comparing the current environmental change with these events is difficult because the rates of environmental change are unprecedented. It is therefore difficult to predict what the outcome of the current anthropogenic experiment will be.” However, the report continues: “it can be said that we are pushing the Earth system to its limits.”

The workshop participants concluded, “Unless action is taken now, the consequences of our activities are at a high risk of causing, through the combined effects of climate change, overexploitation, pollution and habitat loss, the next globally significant extinction event in the ocean.” Again, they mean in geologic time.

So what will we do? This is not the first report to state with certainty that our oceans, and thus our ocean dependent populations and economies, are in serious jeopardy. In 2003 the Pew Ocean Commission report led off with the following, “America’s oceans are in crisis and the stakes could not be higher.” In 2004, the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, as mandated by Congress in the Oceans Act of 2000, published their final report and pronounced, “The importance of our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes cannot be overstated; they are critical to the very existence and wellbeing of the nation and its people. Yet, as the 21st century dawns, it is clear that these invaluable and life-sustaining assets are vulnerable to the activities of humans.”

Nearly two centuries ago, the poet Byron could write:

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean—roll.
Ten-thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
Stops with the shore.

Well, no more. Now, in 2011, this international group of scientists reminds us that we are now marking the oceans with ruin and that “the human interactions with the ocean must change,” to quote their report, “to sustainable management of all activities that impinge marine ecosystems.”

Mr. President, we must work together to preserve and protect the ocean ecosystems we rely on so heavily, for we too are greater than the sum of our parts. In a bipartisan effort, Senator SNOWE and I have introduced the National Endowment for the Oceans to provide dedicated funding for ocean and coastal research, restoration, protection, and conservation. Too often, the knowledge and the information we need to better protect and understand these ecosystems comes too late or comes not at all. We hope to change that.

Together, we can still turn the tide to protect our ocean and our society, but if we are to have any chance, we must act soon, and we must make progress quickly. I look forward to working with my colleagues to confront these looming challenges.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I am in somewhat of a unique position as a returning Senator after being out of Congress for 12 years. I never contemplated running for the Senate again or being back on this floor in any capacity except as a former Senator, but I had a chance to do it over, I guess is the best phrase, and assess what is important and why I am here.

I ran for only one reason. I am deeply concerned about the direction of our country and our plunge into debt. I want to try and avoid coming here and assessing blame, but rather set aside who is responsible. I want us to avoid the politics of all this and simply recognize this is the situation we face. Our fiscal situation has potentially dire consequences for the future of this country, not just for our children and grandchildren, but even for this generation.

Our economy is not in good shape. We still have not recovered from one of the deepest recessions since the Great Depression. There are a lot of people out of work. The official unemployment number is 9.2 percent. The real number is a lot higher than that because many people have given up looking for work, or they extended their

time in school because they know that if they graduate and get out into the job market they are not going to be able to find work in the area they are trained for, or perhaps in any area. A lot of people have tried and tried and simply cannot find work.

It is clear and I think there is a consensus—if not total consensus at least pretty close to total consensus—that we simply have run out of money. As a government we have made promises that we can no longer afford to pay for and fulfill, without serious financial restructuring. We have enjoyed a lot of largess and a lot of prosperity in the past. As a result, commitments were made for spending in discretionary programs, building highways, and sewer systems, etc.—a lot of good things but things we simply no longer can afford.

We see this happening across the world. There has been a 60-year spurt or commitment to credit and now the money has run out to pay for all that. Whether it is southern Europe, other parts of the world or the United States, this is a very difficult situation. For the last 6 or 7 months a lot of us have worked very hard to try to find a solution. We are now in the month of July, and we are approaching the date in which we reach our debt limit. We no longer can continue to borrow without raising that limit.

About 40 percent of everything we spend now has to be borrowed. That is unsustainable. We are told that funding for the basic programs that help the senior citizens of our country enjoy the rest of their lives—Medicare and Social Security—are drying up, and it will not be long before either benefits have to be cut or programs become insolvent. No one here wants to see that happen. What we do want to see happen, though, are necessary steps to preserve those programs for the future.

This crisis is occurring all over the world. We are watching it take place as it creeps through different countries, and now we are facing that. Whether it is a liberal economist or conservative economist or someone in between, or someone with no political interest, there is consensus that we have to take action and we need to take it now. We cannot postpone it. We have been doing this for years.

We all knew the baby boomers would retire and put tremendous pressure on our budget, and that is exactly what has happened. The quicker we take action, the less painful it will be. It is going to be painful because we have put fixing this problem off for so long.

For 6 or 7 months there has been a sincere effort by a lot of people to solve this problem—Republicans and Democrats. These are people who genuinely have concern for the future of this country and believe we need to address these issues, as painful as they are. It goes against political instincts of preparing and positioning oneself for reelection, whether it is 2012 or beyond.

But as I said from the beginning, we must find a way to transcend politics

and the 2012 election. Unfortunately, the closer we get to the crisis, the more we see politicians positioning themselves so as not to be blamed.

The reason we came here was not to position ourselves politically so we can succeed in the next election. The reason we came was to deal with the problem in front of us right now and that needs to be addressed right now. What is the rough consensus? The rough consensus is that if we don't have at least, over the next 10 years, \$4 trillion to \$6 trillion of cuts in discretionary spending and in some of the mandatory programs, we are not going to have a credible program the financial world will be able to look at and say: You can still trust in the value of the dollar and ability to continue viewing America as a safe haven to place investments.

There is a consensus that unless we make structural changes—not just cuts and nicks and little slices here and there, but structural changes—in the entitlement programs, they will not be solvent in the years ahead. Then we will have to turn to those senior citizens and beneficiaries and low-income people and say: I am sorry. We simply cannot pay you what we had committed to pay you. Your benefits are going to have to be reduced, or we are going to have to raise taxes to pay for it.

Without comprehensive tax reform, we are not going to have the kind of package we need to create a dynamic, growing economy that can solve some of our revenue problems. It is not just cutting, it is not just growth, but it is a combination of those items and structural reform that is necessary in a package, and that is what we have been debating: how to get there.

What is disturbing to me lately is that we have shifted away from that central focus, and now we are focusing on who will take the blame when we default or don't default on August 2. There is a lot of political posturing around here. This is not about corporate jets. It is not about all these ads out there and mailings and so forth saying: Congress is going to take away your Social Security. Congress is going to slash your Medicare benefits.

I guess I am asking that we acknowledge the reality of the situation we are in, that we do our very best to put this above the politics of 2012, and work to find some sensible solution to all of this.

I believe comprehensive tax reform can potentially provide a way to address the need for revenue and the need for growth. As we know, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of special expenditures, exemptions, subsidies, credits in the Tax Code that were put in for the few and not for the many, that have complicated our Tax Code to the point where no one can understand it except for someone with an advanced degree in accounting or law.

So I believe tax reform is essential as a part of whatever reform package we finally come up with to address the

debt. Senator WYDEN and I, on a bipartisan basis—a Democrat from Oregon, a Republican from Indiana—have put together a comprehensive tax reform package. We don't call it perfect. We are open to suggestions. But it eliminates those special exemptions and uses the revenues gained from cutting loopholes to lower tax rates for Americans. Our corporations pay the highest corporate tax rate of every one of our global competitors except one. There are 36 countries that compete and sell their products around the world, and we are 35 out of 36 when it comes to our tax rate. We want to level playing field with the rest of them because we think we can outcompete, and that will be a significant and positive impact on our economy. So using those revenues from eliminating loopholes as a way of lowering tax rates and addressing some of the needs we have is certainly something we ought to be exploring.

Lastly, let me just say we need to focus on the reality of the situation in a personal way because we get caught up in numbers, and we get caught up in generalities. What are we trying to do? We are trying to get this economy moving again so people who have been searching for work for 2 and 3 years can get their jobs back; so young couples who wish to raise a family have the opportunity to buy a home; so parents who are saving and trying to get their children into good schools for postsecondary education have the ability to do that; so college graduates can come out of school with a degree and find a place to work and begin a career.

We owe it to the people of our country who are suffering right now, and there are many. We owe it to this Nation that has provided so much opportunity and so much prosperity for so many people. No country in the world has come close to what America has achieved. We owe it to our children and our grandchildren who will inherit what we have done or not done. The reality is, we are going to transfer a debt load onto our children and future generations that they may not be able to overcome. I don't want to leave that legacy. I don't want to be part of a generation that does that. So I think it is time for us to stand up and do what is necessary to address this problem.

Letters and emails from Indiana are running 100 to 1 in favor of cutting government, and running 100 to 1 against cutting anything in Social Security or Medicare. I have people coming into my office every day saying: We know we have to get our fiscal house in order, but let me tell you why our program needs to be exempted.

As politicians, we want to say yes to people. As responsible, elected officials faced with a very difficult situation, we have to, with compassion, look at people and say: No, we are not able to do this. We are not able to afford this, but we are taking this action today so we can afford it in the future. We are taking action now so we can leave future generations with the same types of op-

portunities our generation has enjoyed and the benefits that come from living in America. That may cost some people their elections. There are a number of people here who are willing to sacrifice for that purpose.

Do we want to leave and say: Well, I survived all these years unscathed politically, or do we want to leave here saying at the right time we did the right thing? At the time of crisis, at a time when our country desperately needed us to come together to address this very serious problem that could plunge our country into a deep recession, if not depression, at a time when financial institutions around the world are fragile, at a time when wars and conflicts are popping up all over the globe, did we do the right thing? What do we want our legacy to be regardless of the consequences?

We are 2 or 3 weeks away from defaulting on our debt. There are a lot of excuses around here about that and some even think it will not have many consequences. It will. The idea of using that as leverage to gain what we need to do doesn't appear to have worked.

I think if we keep our focus simply on default or not default, we still have a major problem. Just simply finding a way to get through this and raising the debt limit does not solve the underlying problem. That has to be addressed. I wish we had been able to do that because the situation is dire. We cannot wait until 2013. We need to do it now.

So here I am. I don't have answers. I have some guidelines from people who know a lot more about this than I do, people who do not have a political stake in this in terms of what they think we need to do to put together a package. We need a plan that has credibility with the financial world, so that what has happened in Greece, Portugal and Ireland and maybe now in Italy or Spain, and other places in the world will not happen here because we have restored some confidence and faith in the American people and the investment see the United States as a safe haven for their money. We need credibility so others know we have seen the problem, we have recognized it, we have taken meaningful steps, and while it will be painful and take time—America has come through.

To paraphrase Winston Churchill: America always will do the right thing after it has tried all the wrong things. Well, we spent a lot of years doing the wrong things and not recognizing that we were building up an unsustainable fiscal situation that would come back to haunt us. We have tried a lot of methods and postponements and deferments and everything else. What we have not done is stand up to the problem we have and do what is necessary, take this above politics, and do what is right for America.

Mr. COATS. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MERKLEY). The Senator from Alaska.

CROATIA

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, I rise to speak briefly about progress in the nation of Croatia, which I was honored to visit recently.

At the invitation of the Croatian Minister of Defense, I participated in what is known as the "Croatian Summit," a gathering of leaders from Eastern Europe.

The theme of this year's summit was: "A New Decade for Southeast Europe: Finalizing the Transition."

Less than 15 years after a terrible ethnic war that devastated Croatia, the nation is making enormous progress. It is rapidly making a transition to a market-based economy and its government leaders are committed to a strong and lasting partnership with the United States.

They are a great partner of ours in Afghanistan and in other trouble spots across the globe.

That is personally important to me because 100 years ago this year, my grandfather emigrated from Croatia to this country. John Begich—then it was spelled B-E-G-I-C—then 17 years old, left his farm and eventually settled in northern Minnesota's Iron Range.

John Begich and his young bride, Anna Martinich had four children. Their youngest, Nicholas, made his way to America's new frontier of Alaska even before we were a state. He was my father.

Nick Begich was an educator and eventually was elected Alaska's lone Member of the U.S. House of Representatives in 1970. I am honored to follow in his footsteps as a Member of the Senate, where I am the only Member of Croatian decent.

My recent visit to Dubrovnik was my first to Croatia. I was honored to represent this body at the summit, along with officials from the State Department and U.S. Embassy.

I was impressed with the great progress underway there, as well as the excellent job being performed by our embassy personnel. There are enormous opportunities for partnership between the United States and Croatia, and I am anxious to pursue those.

I ask unanimous consent that my remarks at the Croatia Summit be printed in the RECORD to document my participation in the summit and the strong partnership between our nations.

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

CROATIA SUMMIT PANEL: SECURITY CHALLENGES IN THE ALTERED MEDITERRANEAN

Thank you, Defense Minister Božinović, for that kind introduction.

Thanks to all the government leaders of Croatia and to the people of Croatia for the warm hospitality you have extended to me in the short time I've been here. It's also an honor to meet with many of the other leaders of the region at this Summit.

Visiting Croatia has been a life-long dream of mine, never realized until yesterday. It was exactly 100 years ago that a 17-year-old farmer by the name of John Begich left the

family farm in the small village of Podlapaca, over the mountains from the Adriatic not far from Zagreb.

Upon landing at Ellis Island, they gave him a new name—Begich—with an H. And permission to establish himself in America. John Begich was my grandfather. He eventually settled in Minnesota's Iron Range.

John Begich and his young bride, Anna Martinich, had four children. Their youngest—Nicholas—made his way to America's new frontier of Alaska even before we were a state. He was my father.

Nick Begich was an educator and eventually was elected Alaska's lone member of the United States House of Representatives in 1970. I'm honored to follow in his footsteps as a member of the United States Senate, where I am the only member of Croatian decent.

From the moment of my election nearly three years ago, the people of Croatia have treated me as a long-lost son. In fact, I've had better coverage in the Croatian press than my hometown newspapers back in Alaska!

When I was invited to participate in this Croatian Summit, I jumped at the opportunity. Not because I'm an expert in the issues of this region, but more to commend the people of Croatia for your enormous progress and your great partnership with my country.

Croatia has made remarkable political progress since the end of the war more than 15 years ago. You are a welcome member of NATO and will soon become the 28th member of the European Union. Both of these landmarks came with enormous challenge, and I salute your achievement. There will be bumps in the road to this new future.

And there is no doubt that Croatia has earned membership in both. As a NATO member, Croatia has stepped up to the responsibility of providing security in both the region and internationally.

As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I am closely tuned to military engagements across the globe. By the end of this year, nearly 10,000 soldiers from my own state of Alaska will be serving in harm's way in Afghanistan. This is one of the highest percentages of any state. Their service on the front lines is not without controversy back home, and I know you face the same questions here. So I thank you for your partnership.

Croatia's troop commitment in Afghanistan—330, soon to be 350—is one of the highest per-capita contributions in the International Security and Assistance Force there. And Croatia has taken the lead in establishing a military police training center in Afghanistan, to which other members in the region will also contribute trainers.

This cooperation alone, in faraway Afghanistan, involving countries that not long ago were embroiled in a vicious war, brings a certain stability to the region of the former Yugoslavia and creates a unique opportunity.

Fifteen years ago Croatia was a security consumer, with UN Peacekeeping troops deployed throughout the country. It is now a security provider, with 472 troops deployed across the globe, including in Kosovo, the Golan Heights, Afghanistan, Western Sahara, India-Pakistan, and in counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. They even have staff officers assigned to NATO operations in Libya.

One impressive observation: Croatia recently hosted the U.S.-led "Immediate Response" military exercise involving troops from countries throughout the region. Most importantly, Serbian troops participated.

Imagine, just more than 15 years since Serb and Croat troops fought it out throughout this country, Serbian and Croatian

troops cooperated side by side in an exercise to ensure security in the region. This is a testament to the determination of the governments of Serbia and Croatia to put the past behind them. This type of cooperation ensures that this region will have a secure and prosperous future.

Croatia has also demonstrated a desire to play a constructive role in assisting neighboring Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia's stability and prosperity are absolutely key to security in the region.

Croatia is in a position to play a positive and leading role in assisting countries in the region in their efforts at Euro-Atlantic integration. Joining the EU and NATO, with their shared values of democracy, human rights and rule of law, is perhaps the best way to ensure security and prosperity in the region.

In early May, I was honored to welcome to my office Croatian President Josipovic. I congratulated him then on the enormous progress Croatia has achieved in a little more than a decade after a devastating war.

I understand that per capita income is the second highest in the former Yugoslav states. Health, education and other quality of life factors are on par with many European countries. Despite these signs of progress, the president reminded me that Croatia's economy remains troubled, with high unemployment and outdated industries. That's a situation we can certainly sympathize with in my country.

One note of caution: Croatia still has a long way to go to reform its overly bureaucratized economy in a way that will ensure prosperity ensures stability and encourages investment.

Croatia, like many of its European neighbors, is in a position to play a positive role in providing security in a Mediterranean that is in transition. I noted earlier that Croatia has provided staff officers as members of the NATO team conducting operations in Libya. Croatia has also stated publicly that it is working with the anti-Ghadafi Transitional National Council, and has recognized it as the legitimate voice of the Libyan people.

Just as the countries of East and Central Europe had their own European Spring in 1989 and after, North Africa and the Middle East is groping toward a kind of democracy and social justice that for the most part had eluded them. The nations of Europe, especially those like Croatia who made the transition from dictatorship to democracy, can and are playing a special role to help all the people of the Mediterranean achieve democracy, rule of law and prosperity. Euro-Atlantic engagement with the pro-Democracy movements in North Africa and the Middle East is the best way to ensure their revolutions do not take a turn down the wrong path.

The U.S. is anxious to assist with economic partnerships with this region. One specific area is with increased tourism.

From what little I've been able to see of Dubrovnik, you have an enormously attractive city which many Americans would love to visit. And we'd certainly welcome Croatian visitors to our states, including Alaska. I am working with Senator Mikulski of Maryland on her visa waiver bill to ease the ability of Croatians to get visas to visit the United States.

Let me conclude by restating how excited I am to be here in Croatia and to commend you for a productive and lasting partnership with the United States. I hope this conference creates many more opportunities for cooperation within this region.

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, I wish to say thank you for the opportunity to

put on the RECORD my experiences in Croatia this last weekend and, again, seeing the country after 15 years ago going through incredible devastation to where they are today.

I yield the floor, and I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BUDGET LISTENING TOUR

Mrs. HAGAN. Mr. President, I rise today to report to the Senate on the completion of my North Carolina Budget Listening Tour. While people in this town were mired in political gamesmanship that seems to be pushing parties further apart, I wanted to hear directly from community leaders and business leaders in North Carolina about how they think we should be approaching the responsibility we have to reduce our deficit and our debt. I held listening sessions all over the State—from Raleigh to Greensboro and Charlotte to Wilmington—and I heard from North Carolinians of every kind: small business owners, health care workers, veterans, entrepreneurs, and more.

The message I heard could not have been more different from the partisan bickering in Washington that is dominating the airwaves. In Washington, we see negotiators walking away from the table, refusing any and all compromise, putting politics ahead of what is best for the American people. In North Carolina, people were coming to the table and putting party aside for commonsense solutions to meet our shared budget obligations. To me, the message was crystal clear: Washington needs to take a lesson from North Carolina. It is far past time to put partisanship aside and do what is right for the American people.

At the Charlotte listening session, I heard from the executive director of a health care nonprofit responsible for caring for the elderly. She told me about important ways we can reduce health care costs and save lives, such as expanding access to preventive care for seniors to reduce the onset of expensive chronic diseases. Gayla Woody, the director of aging at the Centralina Council of Governments, told me the story of how one of her clients—a man caring for his wife with Alzheimer's—was able to continue to care for her at their home thanks to the comparatively small investments made in the Family Caregiver Program rather than a more expensive nursing home. They both also told me we cannot afford an extreme plan to turn Medicare into a voucher program for vulnerable seniors. Balancing the budget on their backs is not a solution I can support.

I also heard from small business owners, economic development coordina-

tors, and community bankers at our Wilmington and Raleigh tour stops. They told me about how Washington's partisan paralysis is preventing them from having the sort of certainty they need to be able to make the hard decisions to invest in their businesses and to grow jobs in this economy for their companies. If these businesses don't know whether they ought to be investing in new equipment or new employees, then we are not going to be able to sustain the economic growth that is a necessary component to reducing our deficit and our debt.

I also heard from a veteran of the U.S. Marines Corps and current chaplain for the Onslow County Special Incident Response Team. This dedicated public servant talked about the importance of protecting services for our veterans. And I will fight for them just as hard as they fought for us. He also talked to me about the importance of priorities. He said we ought to keep our promises to those who sacrificed for us—our seniors and our veterans—but we also need to invest in our children and their education. It was important for the future, he believed, and I agree he was right.

While the challenge of reducing our deficit may appear daunting, I don't believe meeting it is impossible if Washington takes to heart the message I heard all over North Carolina last month. Both sides—Democrats and Republicans—need to put aside partisanship and come to an agreement that is bipartisan and balanced, one that includes a shared sacrifice but also fulfills the sacred promises made to our seniors and our veterans and makes the critical investments necessary for a prosperous American future. Above all else, they do not want us to kick the can down the road one more time. They sent us here to make hard decisions. Putting them off to resolve during some future crisis is simply not an option.

These broad goals and values are widely shared across party lines. I recognize turning them into a bipartisan, balanced solution to our fiscal challenges will not be easy, but the consequences of failing to do so are simply too great to ignore.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE DEBT

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today as a Member of the Senate—specifically, though, as a Senator from Wyoming because in Wyoming our families know they have to live within their means. Wyoming is a State that lives within its means. In Wyoming, our very constitution re-

quires that our State live within its means.

Washington has a total debt now that is over \$14 trillion and continues to climb every day. Wyoming's total debt is zero. How did Washington fail where Wyoming succeeded? Well, in Washington, this city overspends in Washington there is nothing really to stop it. In Wyoming, we live within our means because our constitution demands that we balance our budget every year. It is time for Washington to take a lesson from Wyoming and the other States that balance their budgets every year.

The President says, "All of us agree that we should use this opportunity to do something meaningful on debt and deficits." Well, passing a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution is possibly the most meaningful thing we could do.

This city's finances are in disarray. Our Nation's finances are in disarray. It has been over 800 days since this body has passed a budget resolution. Since the last time a full budget was passed, our country has spent over \$7 trillion, and \$3.2 trillion of that was money we did not have.

Our total debt now is over \$14 trillion. People say: How much money is that? The number is astonishingly large. Let's try to put it a little bit into perspective. Every day, Washington borrows over \$4 billion. We borrowed over \$4 billion yesterday, \$4 billion today, and if someone will lend us the money, we will borrow over \$4 billion tomorrow. That is over \$2 million a minute, every minute. Every single day, Washington borrows enough money to buy tens of thousands of new homes. Every single hour, Washington borrows enough to buy nearly 2 million barrels of oil. Every single minute, Washington borrows enough to send 53 students to private college for a full year. Every single second, Washington borrows enough to buy two new automobiles. We paid over \$200 billion last year in interest on the debt alone. The President talks about a tax on private jets. That is enough money—the interest alone—to buy over 200 private jets every day.

It is not enough to think about this in the large terms; you have to try to put it in terms that people understand. Because we are spending and borrowing so much money, it is difficult to put it into terms that people grasp and that they see. It is good to hear the President acknowledge that we have to stop making more than the minimum payments in order to pay off and deal with this incredible debt.

The President has also announced his willingness to make a deal that he says involves meaningful changes to Medicare, to Social Security, and to Medicaid. To his credit, the President has accepted that much of the problem with saving these programs springs from his own side of the aisle. He says, and I agree, that now is the time to do it.

The Associated Press quoted the President asking the most important question of all: "If not now, when?" Well, the clock is ticking. In just 13 years, Medicare will be bankrupt. We have to strengthen Medicare. In 25 years, the same will be true of Social Security. Unlike our debt limit, this is not a limit Congress can simply legislate away. We have to act now to prevent these programs from failing not just today's generation but future generations.

The Senate minority leader said: I commend the President for putting Social Security and Medicare on the table.

He is correct in doing that. So with the President seeing the light on so many issues, why are we still talking about finding a solution instead of actually getting one passed here in the Congress? Because, for all that he claims to understand, the President has still fallen back on the same tax-and-spend policies that made this economic situation worse. It is clear that the policies of this administration have taken a tough problem and may have made it worse. On the President's inauguration day, the unemployment rate in this country was just under 8 percent. Today, it is 9.2 percent. Every American child who is born today will owe roughly \$45,000. Let's compare that to the day President Obama was inaugurated. Every child then owed roughly \$35,000. So in just those short years, the debt on a child born in America, the debt they are born with has gone up from \$35,000 to \$45,000. These disturbing economic results are the direct result of the past 2 years of policies.

Liberals want to hold the U.S. credit rating hostage for more tax hikes, and the President is leading the charge. He is trying to push more tax hikes despite the very fact that even he has now said it is the worst time to raise taxes. Back in 2009, President Obama said: The last thing you want to do is raise taxes during a recession. So why, then, is he calling for \$400 billion in tax increases today? And why is the Senate Budget Committee chairman trying to one-up the President by calling for \$2 trillion? Well, of course, the President will not admit he wants to raise taxes. He likes to use wiggle words. He uses words such as "revenue" or the "spending in the Tax Code" instead. But when you translate this Washington doublespeak, it comes out "higher taxes."

With the spin exposed, liberals are trying another tack: They are trying to claim they will delay the tax increases until the economy recovers. They are not saying they are not going to raise taxes; they say: Let's put it off for a while. This week, the President showed what this really means. He said, "Nobody is going to raise taxes right now." He said, "We are talking about potentially 2013 and the out-years." So, in other words, this is not really about waiting until the economic recovery comes; it is about wait-

ing until 2013, until after the President's reelection campaign.

More troubling still, the President has already signaled that he wants to spend more in the future. Our problem is not that we are taxed too little, it is that we spend too much. Yet the President wants to spend even more. At his press conference, he said he is only tackling our debt so we can be "in a position to make the kind of investments I think are going to be necessary to win the future." When the President talks about investment, it is common knowledge that what he is talking about is spending.

Finally, for all his posturing about getting this done, now it is really the President who seems to want to kick the can down the road. His plan may cut trillions, but Washington would be able to take as long as 10 years to do it.

Minority Leader MCCONNELL has already blown the liberal cover on these very cynical political bluffs. He said, "The President has presented us with three choices: smoke and mirrors, tax hikes, or default." Well, Republicans choose none of the above.

As a doctor, I have taken the Hippocratic Oath. The oath says: Do no harm.

Raising taxes will harm our economy. Cutting spending at a snail's pace will do very little to help. We have to tackle our fiscal problems today. The first step toward solving these problems should be to pass an amendment to our Constitution requiring Washington to balance its budget.

A balanced budget amendment would require Washington to spend no more money than it takes in every year. Such an amendment would force Washington to live within its means as many States do and as families across the country do.

I come to the floor as cosponsor of the balanced budget amendment. As a matter of fact, every Republican in the Senate is a cosponsor of the balanced budget amendment, 47 Republican Senators. Every one is a cosponsor of the balanced budget amendment. We are united and will remain united. This is a commonsense approach, and it will show the American people that they can trust their government with their money once again because right now the American people have little confidence they are getting value for the money they send to Washington.

I believe we need to lead today, not defer leadership until tomorrow. Americans are courageous; they deserve a courageous government. That is why I know the American people overwhelmingly support a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution.

The President said the other day that it is time to "eat our peas." We all saw him on television saying it is time to "eat our peas." I agree with another President, Ronald Reagan, who said it is time to "starve the beast." The beast is Washington and the Washington wasteful spending that the American people are seeing every day.

Mr. President, Americans pay their debts. They want their country to do so too. It is time for Washington to listen. It is time for a balanced budget constitutional amendment, and then it is time to start paying off this massive debt.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HAGAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, like you, I have heard a lot of loose talk over the past months invoking the Founding Fathers—loose talk to underscore an expedient argument about what they would be doing if they were legislating today. But the way our Founders are often used is as a caricature to distort history for the benefit of partisan and narrow interests.

To hear some people talk about it, you would think the Founders were engaged in a process of dismantling a country rather than building one. That version of events is not only wrong but it also thoroughly diminishes the founding generation's extraordinary accomplishments and the lessons we should draw from them.

Our Founders met enormous challenges with great courage and sacrifice to start a country around an ideal. In the same vein, our modern history has been characterized by meeting great challenges with distinct qualities. We are hard working. We meet our challenges by refusing to allow their complexities or attendant political difficulty to lead us toward accepting failure as an option. We are inclusive. We meet our great challenges by meeting them as one, by crafting solutions that involve buy-in, participation, and sacrifice from all parts of the political landscape, and the American people.

We act with courage. We meet our great challenges when, and only when, the leaders of the day have the courage to decide they will be the ones who meet those challenges, that they will transcend the short-term incentives and political imperatives of their time to do something of greater importance.

These traits have enabled us to end a Civil War, overcome the Great Depression, and march toward civil rights. But they have also allowed us to do smaller and still very important things such as work together in the 1980s to protect and preserve Social Security.

Today, that honorable past and the sacrifice it entailed has been hijacked to protect and defend narrow interest group politics and tax loopholes.

Our tax and regulatory codes are backward, facing in a way that is straining our recession-battered middle class and failing to drive innovation in our economy. As a result, middle-class

income continues to fall, the gap between rich and poor grows wider, and all of us wait for a 20th-century economy to produce 21st-century jobs. That wait will be in vain.

It will particularly be in vain for those of our citizens unlucky enough to be born poor and who therefore stand a 9 in 100 chance of ever graduating from college in the United States of America in the year 2011. That is because year after year we have torn each other up so much on issue after issue, because of the smallness we have exhibited in the face of what our big challenges are, and now we find ourselves at a crisis point without a politics capable of even addressing the kinds of challenges we face each year, let alone a generational crisis like our deficit and debt.

I have come to the floor for months arguing for the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing our deficits and debt. What Colorado wants is nothing more than what this country has seen from past generations of leaders in past times of crisis. As I have said over and over, what people in red parts of the State and what people in blue parts of the State want is a solution that materially addresses the problem. They know we are not going to fix it overnight, but they want it materially addressed. They want a demonstration that we are all in it together, that everybody has something to contribute to solving the problem. They emphatically want it to be bipartisan because they don't believe in an either-party-going-it-alone approach when it comes to our debt and our deficit.

I add a corollary to that, which is that we need to assure our capital markets that the paper they bought is actually worth what they paid for it.

It was in the spirit of getting together on a solution like that my colleague, Senator MIKE JOHANNIS, and I wrote a letter to the President. Sixty-four Members of the Senate—evenly divided between both parties—signed onto an approach that called for entitlement reform, tax reform, and discretionary spending cuts. The math compels this answer. The economy needs this certainty. Colorado and the country want this result. It should achieve the \$4.5 trillion in deficit reduction over 10 years and should have a 3-to-1 ratio of spending cuts to revenue increases. That is what the Bowles-Simpson Commission recommended.

Our political system seems intent on thwarting an approach supported by Senators in both parties. Both parties seem willing to submit to that flawed system's perverse incentives.

While I am convinced that many in this body and the House would actually like to make this deal, these interests distort the conversation into a partisan war and rip it apart from the inside.

On one side, some advocate for no changes to the Medicare Program; on the other, for no changes to revenue. Yet these are among the two biggest drivers of our long-term debt—and everybody knows it.

Only in Washington could people pretend that significant deficit reduction could be accomplished while ignoring the two biggest fiscal challenges we face. I am a former school superintendent, and what that tells me is that Washington has a severe math problem. We are in need of remediation.

When it comes to a solution on the debt, the contrast between Washington's dysfunction and Colorado's common sense could not be clearer. Yesterday, I had a call with Colorado business leaders who spanned the ideological spectrum—both Democrats and Republicans—to talk about our deficit and debt. Despite their differing party affiliations, there was clearly a consensus that everything needed to be on the table when it comes to the debt—including both tax revenue and entitlement changes. But somehow this common sense gets lost in the current debate.

If changes to entitlements are off the table, we as leaders will fail. If changes in revenue are off the table, we as leaders will fail.

I turn to the American people watching this debate with worry or disgust and say: If challenges to our ideological beliefs or to the politics that historically define our debate are off the table, then as a generation we cannot meet the challenges we face, and we are not going to be able to support the aspirations we have for our kids and our grandkids.

This is about courage: courage on the part of Democrats who know refusing to touch Medicare is an argument we could win, but the price of winning that argument may be losing America's ability to pay its bills; courage on the part of Republicans who know revenues are unpopular but who secretly understand that we can't simply cut our way out of this budget hole. And in a moment of such crisis, this should be the least Americans can expect of us.

During the worst recession since the Great Depression, Madam President, it was my privilege to spend the last 2½ years traveling my State while we were going through this horrible economic turmoil. Americans and Coloradans have made gut-wrenching decisions in their personal lives—about where to send their children to school, how and where to live, what medicines they can afford, and what medicines they might hope to live without. Local officials have been held accountable to citizens for the decisions they have had to make. Yet Congress has struggled to reflect the ideals and aspirations of the people we represent.

This DC political culture serves special interests but it doesn't even register the needs of Coloradans. No business would sacrifice the economic interests of its shareholders, because the ones that do are gone. No mayors in Colorado would threaten their bond rating for political ideology—not one. It wouldn't occur to one of them to threaten their credit rating, because

mothers, fathers, taxpayers, and everyday citizens would have their heads, and rightfully so. I think the difference is that no special interest stands between a Colorado local government official and the people he or she represents.

Having served in local government, I have to say what often seems to be an unattainable standard for a high officeholder is simply life in the real world for the rest of us. Last week, we came to Washington to cast a series of inconsequential votes. But by the end of the week, some of us were encouraged by the talk coming from the President and the Speaker.

My friend JOHN MCCAIN came to the floor pushing the need for a breakout strategy, referenced a Wall Street Journal editorial that called for a far more comprehensive and far-reaching plan. But now we learn a comprehensive deal feels once again out of reach. We are told we will have to settle for something small that one more time kicks the can down the road; that taxes and entitlements are just too hard for Washington politics.

I may not have spent enough time here to see through these political games. This may all be part of an elaborate strategy to get to yes. But I shudder—I shudder—when I wonder what investors, our creditors, and the American people think of this political game of chicken. Unlike Congress, they do not conduct their business with winks and nods, and they solve their problems before they become insurmountable.

All of which brings me back to our Founders and the political leadership of other generations past that made these enormous and difficult decisions. As for us, we have chosen to put them off time after time, and now we are at an inflection point where we need to get this done. We have a \$1.5 trillion deficit and almost \$15 trillion in debt. Revenue is at a 60-year low and spending is at over a 60-year high. And we have the path to begin to bridge this. The Simpson-Bowles commission has given us that path forward.

I am the first to say—and I should say—this debt is something we all own. I voted for things that contributed to it, as have all of my colleagues, and of all the things that comprise the debt, there is something each member of our great Nation wants or needs. We all share in the responsibility for how we arrived at this point.

So to be clear, if anybody thinks this is merely an attack on the institution, we need to understand this massive debt is something for which we are all responsible. Those who voted to fight the wars and to pass the tax cuts did so as a reflection of what they believed was a moment of truth. These decisions were not made in a vacuum. We got here because we aspire to be a society that is better than our competitors. We are all responsible. We are all responsible for the crisis that looms. But the inflection point we have reached has

led to a different mandate, a different moment of truth. The American people are asking us to lead.

This is a country of patriots, of incredibly courageous people who take on challenges little and big every day. I have tremendous respect for my colleagues and for this institution, and I am well aware that until about 6 months ago I had never even been elected dogcatcher. So I recognize how much I have to learn. But clearly—clearly—we are not living up to the standard of courage that past generations of leaders and every generation of ordinary Americans have set for us. Congress is certainly not living up to the standard the people of Colorado and of this country expect from us.

I wonder if maybe we have looked at this the wrong way. The President has put entitlement cuts on the table, and that is the right thing to do. I encourage him to do more.

As for the question of revenue, I will tell any politician that this is not the time to be wedded to the status quo. There is nothing magical about current revenue levels, about our Tax Code, or about all the loopholes and special interest perks that we account for only by borrowing more and more money.

But there is something else important to mention, which is also lost in the debate. We have waged two long and costly wars. I don't want to re-litigate today the wisdom of going to war. My colleagues in the Senate and House—many of whom are still here in the Congress—had to cast difficult votes to send our young men and women into harm's way. But regardless of your position for or against, Congress ultimately made a decision to layer those costs on top of our current budget. We did this instead of accounting for them as part of our annual expenses. That was the decision that Congress made, and it began our slide from surplus to deficit.

So for a moment let us separate the costs of these wars from the important and robust debate we are having about entitlement spending—Medicare, Social Security, and our discretionary programs—and resolve a threshold question, or maybe two: Are we, as a generation, going to pay for these wars or are we going to continue to borrow from foreign governments and stick our kids with the bill? Are we even willing to make just a down payment on their incremental costs? Because that is what we are talking about.

The amount outlined by the Debt and Deficit Commission—\$785 billion in tax reform—which, by the way, would lead to lower rates, doesn't even cover the incremental expense of the war commitments we have made. But it would be a good start. Are we willing to walk away from this moment and say we put the burden of fighting and dying in these wars on our sons and daughters, and at the same time leave the burden of paying it to our grandchildren?

And, after all, are we really willing to threaten the full faith and credit of

the United States by failing to raise the debt ceiling for debts we already owe? This is not like cutting up your credit card. This is like getting your mortgage this month and saying, I'm not going to pay it because I spent my money somewhere else. Are we really willing to do that by failing to act comprehensively against our debt at a moment of global fragility in the capital markets? Would we risk all of this just for politics?

Interestingly enough, in their wisdom, the Founders understood and anticipated this very problem. They had a spirited debate about whether the Federal Government should have what they called "a general power of taxation" or whether we should have a system of "internal and external taxation"—a system where the States could impose taxes but the Federal Government would be limited to collecting its revenue through duties on imports.

Ultimately, the Founders resolved the question in favor of the general power of taxation for the exact reasons that are staring us in the face today. So rather than talk about the Founders, I actually want to read what they said on this subject, in the hopes it will give us some guidance. Let me quote from Federalist No. 30. I apologize for the length, Madam President, but, as always, their words impoverish our own.

If the opinions of those who contend for the distinction [between internal and external taxation] were to be received as evidence of truth, one would be led to conclude that there was some known point in the economy of national affairs at which it would be safe to stop and say: Thus far the ends of public happiness will be promoted by supplying the wants of government, and all beyond this is unworthy of our care or anxiety.

They went on to say:

Let us attend to what would be the effects of this situation in the very first war in which we should happen to be engaged. We will presume, for argument's sake, that the revenue arising from the impost duties answers the purposes of a provision for the public debt and of a peace establishment for the Union. Thus circumstanced, a war breaks out. What would be the probable conduct of the government in such an emergency? Taught by experience that proper dependence could not be placed on the success of requisitions, unable by its own authority to lay hold of fresh resources, and urged by considerations of national danger, would it not be driven to the expedient of diverting the funds already appropriated from their proper objects to the defense of the state? It is not easy to see how a step of this kind could be avoided; and if it should be taken, it is evident that it would prove the destruction of public credit at the very moment it was becoming essential to the public safety. To imagine that such a credit crisis might be dispensed with, would be the extreme of infatuation. In the modern system of war, nations the most wealthy are obliged to have recourse to large loans. A country so little opulent as ours must feel this necessity in a much stronger degree. But who would lend to a government that prefaced its overtures for borrowing by an act which demonstrated that no reliance could be placed on the steadiness of its measures for paying? The

loans it might be able to procure would be as limited in their extent as burdensome in their conditions. They would be made upon the same principles that usurers commonly lend to bankrupt and fraudulent debtors, with a sparing hand and enormous premiums.

I am going to paraphrase that in a minute. But it is almost as though Alexander Hamilton, who wrote these words in 1787, were sitting here today. And from the bottom of my heart, I wish he were. He closed the Federalist Paper No. 30 with an admonition to ideologues, writing that:

... [s]uch men must behold the actual situation of their country with painful solicitude, and deprecate the evils which ambition or revenge might, with too much facility, inflict upon it.

As we have at other times in our history, we experienced the kind of evils that Hamilton anticipated on 9/11. We responded. And now, at this extraordinary time, it is left for us to get our house in order.

In truth, these are small decisions, when we consider them in the context of what our Founders faced. Their greatness is measured by the large task they took on and conquered. Ours is merely a junction between our own institutional impulse toward fecklessness and our individual love for our country and for our kids. When faced with similar decisions, families cut back; they sacrifice. And now we must do the same. Now, to paraphrase Hamilton, the last thing we need to do now is act in a way that jacks up our interest rates.

The 100 of us who are here in the Senate didn't create the system in which we operate. None of us decided it would be fun to have special interest groups scoring our every move or lobbyists hounding us about this or that tiny little provision or television channels reducing everything we do and say to a story line of endless minute conflict. And look, I understand what the incentives are here. It is possible we could fail and get away with blaming somebody else. It is possible cutting off our nose to spite our face could be a smart political move in this insane system. But there is a reason we venerate the Founders and Lincoln and the great legislative and executive figures of the last century. They were great not only because of what history threw at them, but because of the way they threw themselves at history.

They raised their hands. They showed real courage not only when they had to but when they didn't. They made themselves of use.

The Founders were practical people—dare I say it, Madam President, practical politicians searching for an ideal that became the United States of America, and they created in their practicality what Lincoln called the last, best hope of Earth. Think of that. Think of our actual history, not a cartoon, and imagine that we stumble, not because the Founders in their time failed to form a union but because in our time we failed to act as one.

Madam President, I yield the floor, and 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. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

THE BUDGET

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I think it is fair to say we have two really major problems we are grappling with here in this Congress. More importantly, the people all across our country are grappling with them.

First, there is an economy that is far too weak. It is growing far too slowly, if at all, and it is certainly producing far too few jobs. The latest data is particularly discouraging on the job-creation front. Until we turn this around and get strong growth, we are not going to produce nearly the number of jobs we need.

The second big problem that strikes me as very disturbing is the unsustainable level of Federal spending and corresponding deficits and debt that have mounted as a result of all that spending. Federal spending since the year 2000, from 2000 to 2010, has doubled from just a couple of years ago when spending was less than 20 percent of our total economic output. Today, it is nearly 25 percent of our total economy, and that is way too large and unsustainable.

All this spending has predictably led to huge deficits. We have been running annual deficits these last couple of years of nearly 10 percent of our entire economy—really staggering in size, \$1.5 trillion for the last couple of years running. The deficits are covered by issuing debt, so we have been accumulating debt at this really breakneck pace.

Of course, all of this debt has caused us to crash into our debt limit, and we are now mired in this debate, in this discussion, in these ongoing, very difficult negotiations over what to do because we have reached the statutory ceiling of the amount of money the Federal Government is permitted by law to borrow—\$14.3 trillion. That is a number which is very difficult to grasp because of its sheer enormity, but there we are. We are at the limit, and we have to decide what we are going to do about it.

I am not impressed with where the current negotiations seem to be and where they have been. I think we have yet to see a plan from the President that lays out exactly what he is willing to cut in spending to put us on a sustainable path.

The President proposed a budget. I sit on the Budget Committee. We looked at that budget, we had testimony about that budget, and what we learned was it is not a serious budget. It would continue with huge deficits

and mounting debt. It did not address any of the fundamental problems. When that budget was on the Senate floor for a vote, the President's budget got zero votes. The President subsequently backed away from his own budget but has not proposed an alternative. Unfortunately, my colleagues in this Chamber on the other side have proposed no budget whatsoever.

So here we are, the world's largest enterprise, the U.S. Government, preparing to spend this year—as we did last year—something on the order of \$3.7 trillion without so much as a blueprint for how we are going to spend that, rules that would govern how it gets allocated in different categories, guidelines for where the revenue is going to come from, how big the deficit will be—none of that. We are simply proceeding along without a budget. I have to say I think that is shockingly irresponsible. Now we go into these discussions about the debt limit. Frankly, it is not clear to me that we are any closer to a resolution today than we were several weeks ago.

Some of us have suggested a solution. We have suggested a way out of this impasse that I would like to describe today. The solution we are proposing is that we go ahead and raise the debt limit by the amount the President has asked. Many of us are not particularly enthusiastic about that, but we acknowledge that failure to do so will at some point in, presumably, early August result in a considerable disruption and a partial government shutdown. It will not result in a default on our debt, and there are many of our ongoing expenses we could continue to cover from ongoing tax revenue, but it would nevertheless be very disruptive, and it is my hope that we never get there and instead find a resolution.

The resolution some of us are proposing—specifically Senator MIKE LEE from Utah, whom I credit a great deal for his leadership—Senator LEE and I have introduced a bill, together with a number of other colleagues—I think we have over 25 cosponsors in the Senate—based on the idea we call cut, cap, and balance. We would agree to raise the debt limit by \$2.4 trillion, as the President has requested, provided that we get ourselves on a path to a balanced budget. By that, we see three pieces: cuts in immediate spending; statutory caps in spending over the next few years; and a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution, which we acknowledge would take several years to achieve. But the point is that the combined effect of these measures would clearly put us on a path to a balanced budget, end the practice of running deficits, and eventually end the need to raise debt limits because we would not be issuing new debt. We would, instead, as a government be living within our means.

If you ask me, this is very reasonable, to suggest that the Federal Government ought to live within its means. It is reasonable for families.

Families do not have any choice; they live within their means. Businesses have to live within their means or they do not survive. And 49 of the 50 States have a requirement that they balance their budgets every year, and they find a way to do it.

This President would not be the first Democratic President to embrace this if he were to embrace this idea. President Clinton, working with a Republican-controlled Congress in the 1990s, first embraced the idea that we ought to strive for a balanced budget, that it was a worthwhile goal, that it was an achievable goal, and within a few years, in fact, they achieved it, two different parties working together—not always enjoying each other's company as much as one might like, but the fact is they got it done. I think we ought to consider using that model today.

As recently as 2007, we were actually quite close to a balanced budget. Our deficit was just over 1 percent of our total economy, as opposed to today, where it is nearly 10 percent of our total economy. I fully acknowledge that we cannot get there overnight, as much as many of us would like to. We have dug a deep hole. We are borrowing almost 40 cents of every dollar we spend. It would be too sudden and Draconian to think we could balance the budget overnight. So we suggested a path that might take 8 or 9 or 10 years to actually reach a balance, but it would surely put us on a path that would get us there, and that would be enormously constructive, not only in the sense that it would ensure the long-term fiscal viability of our country, which is in and of itself an absolutely vital goal, but it would also create some certainty in the market, reduce the risk of huge inflation and huge interest rates and the other dangers that accompany the irresponsibly large deficits, and in the process help to encourage stronger economic growth and job creation.

I think we ought to be flexible in how we get there. We have proposed one way. It is not the only way to do it, but it, importantly, is premised on this principle that we can reach a balance and we ought to do that. It is absolutely critical that we demonstrate that we have the political will and the ability to tackle this, arguably the biggest challenge we face.

We have seen what has been unfolding in Europe because they chose not to tackle these problems in recent years. I suggest we are not that far behind some of the countries in Europe that are in the middle of truly devastating sovereign debt crises. We are not quite there yet, but if we do not change the path we are on, that is the direction we are heading.

Let me walk through the particular items in this approach we are advocating in which we would cut, cap, and balance.

First is to cut spending. We are suggesting a cut from the 2011 levels of \$142 billion. That is actually less than

4 percent of the amount of money the government spent last year—we are still in the current year, but the fiscal year of 2011. It would still spend more than we spent in 2010, so it is very hard to see how this could fairly be described as any kind of Draconian cut. It is a very modest cut in spending. By 2012, the levels will be almost $\$ \frac{1}{2}$ trillion more than the levels of spending in 2008. But that is the first step, to cut spending in the immediate future, in this next fiscal year.

The second is to cap spending over the next several years. To do this, we have established a set of caps, statutory limits on how much the government can spend each year based on the level of spending in the budget resolution I introduced on the Senate floor, which had almost all the Republicans' support. I wish we had some Democratic support, and I still hope we will get some. But the important thing about this budget resolution and these cap levels is they reach a balance—not overnight; it takes 9 years. But by controlling spending and adopting progrowth policies that encourage an expanding economy, we would, following these cap levels, be able to balance our budget. Then, finally, we are advocating that as part of this package, as part of an arrangement, we would agree to raise the debt ceiling. We would also pass in both the House and Senate a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution and send it off to the States.

We would not suggest the increase in the debt limit be contingent upon State option, but I am confident the States would, in fact, pass a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution if we in Congress would send it to them. It would have three big features and, again, the details ought to be a subject of discussion. One that would not be open for negotiation would be that the first outlays need to equal revenues. That is obviously the fundamental definition of a balance. We don't run deficits; we make sure we spend no more than we take in.

The second aspect some of us feel strongly about, and I am one of them, is we ought to limit spending as a percentage of our economy so the economy doesn't keep growing, which is what happens when the government occupies too large a segment of our economy.

Finally, we have advocated that we not create a mechanism that simply guarantees big tax increases in order to balance the budget, and to do that we would like—and we have included—a supermajority requirement to raise taxes so that a simple majority wouldn't be enough. It would require a supermajority which would only occur, presumably, in truly extraordinary circumstances.

I believe very strongly we can have strong economic growth and the job creation we need, but to get there we have to create an environment in Washington; we have to pass legisla-

tion and create an environment that encourages risk taking, encourages business formation, encourages new hiring, and we have not been doing such a good job. One of the ways to do that is to put us on a sustainable, viable fiscal path, and the cut, cap, and balance approach would do that.

We would raise the debt limit by the full amount that the President has asked for provided he agree with us to put this country on a path to a balanced budget. I do not think that is asking too much. I think that is a way to achieve long-term fiscal sustainability, and just as importantly it is a way to create an environment for the strong economic growth and job creation we need.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I request unanimous consent to speak up to 20 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mr. NELSON of Florida pertaining to the introduction of S. 1364 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

CORPORAL BRANDON M. KIRTON

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, it is with great sadness that I report the passing of a brave soldier, loving son, dedicated husband, and proud father from Centennial, CO. CPL Brandon M. Kirton died on May 18, 2011, in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, of injuries sustained when his dismounted patrol received small arms and mortar fire. This is one of the most strategically important areas of Afghanistan. He was 25 years old.

Family and friends remember Corporal Kirton as a warm, lighthearted young man. Robert Kirton, his father, said that his son's cheerful disposition at home provided a great contrast to the solemn commitment with which he faced his duties as a soldier. This makes perfect sense, Robert said, because Corporal Kirton had dreamed of putting on an Army uniform from an early age.

Corporal Kirton attended Englewood High School in Englewood, CO, where he was a member of the baseball and soccer teams. He enlisted in the Army shortly after his graduation in 2004, and he was assigned to C Company, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, based at Fort Campbell, KY. Corporal Kirton served a

tour of duty in Iraq and one in Afghanistan—both with distinction.

His record as a soldier demonstrates the Army's proudest traditions of valor, commitment to duty, and strength of character. Corporal Kirton was carrying 70 pounds of gear when CPT Gary Flowers, his commander, first met him in Afghanistan in 115-degree heat. Captain Flowers offered to shoulder a bag for him, an offer which Corporal Kirton declined. He simply replied, "Are you kidding me?"

Corporal Kirton's commanding officers immediately recognized his exceptional bravery and talent. He earned, among other decorations, the Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal, and the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal.

Mark Twain once said, "The fear of death follows from the fear of life. A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time." Corporal Kirton's service was in keeping with this sentiment by selflessly putting country first, he lived life to the fullest. He lived with a sense of the highest honorable purpose.

Mr. President, I stand with Colorado and people nationwide in profound gratitude for Corporal Kirton's tremendous sacrifice. He followed through on his dream of becoming a soldier in the U.S. Army and served honorably in Iraq and Afghanistan when his country needed him most. We are forever humbled by and indebted to the memory of his courageous actions. I ask my colleagues to join in me extending our deepest respects and condolences to Corporal Kirton's family.

THE GOLDEN EAGLE AWARD

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize two of Wyoming's best ski areas—Grand Targhee and the Jackson Hole Mountain Resort—for their hard work and commitment to better management practices. Their records of improving efficiency, reducing energy use, promoting better environmental management, and focusing on sustainable operations have earned them the 2011 National Ski Areas Association Golden Eagle Award for Overall Environmental Excellence. The Golden Eagle Award is presented to ski areas and resorts that have shown a true commitment to making sure our great outdoors will be enjoyed for years to come. I congratulate Grand Targhee and Jackson Hole Mountain Resort for their accomplishments. Wyoming is proud to be home to both of these great ski opportunities.

Jackson Hole Mountain Resort has a history of environmental excellence. They have earned their 2011 Golden Eagle Award for working for 5 years to implement an integrated environmental management system to achieve the International Organization for Standardization's, ISO, 14001 standards. This system is an overall approach to sustainability, continual improvement, and a future of responsible

stewardship of some of the most pristine areas in our country. But this isn't the first time that Jackson Hole Mountain Resort has been recognized for environmental excellence. They have a history of commitment to sound environmental management going back 15 years. They first received the Golden Eagle Award in 1995, and were also awarded a Silver Eagle Award for Excellence in Energy Conservation and Clean Energy in 2003, as well as a Silver Eagle Award for Excellence in Visual Impact in 2005.

Grand Targhee has also worked hard to demonstrate their commitment to environmental quality. This year, they are being recognized with a Golden Eagle Award for committing to reduce their energy use by 10 percent, and then exceeding their goal and achieving an energy savings of 18 percent. Their investments in energy efficiency upgrades, weatherization, and better management practices helped them meet and exceed their goals for improving their energy use. This year marks the third award for environmental excellence for Grand Targhee. In 2008, they received the Silver Eagle Award for Excellence in Waste Reduction and Recycling, and in 2009 they received their first Golden Eagle Award.

Both Jackson Hole Mountain Resort and Grand Targhee have been operating in the Teton Range since the 1960s. They have a history of being some of the best ways to experience Wyoming's amazing landscapes. Their commitment to sound environmental management, conservation, and improving how they use energy demonstrates their commitment to being part of Wyoming's futures for years to come.

I congratulate both resorts for this tremendous accomplishment. It is truly an honor to receive the Golden Eagle Award from the National Ski Areas Association and is one more example of Wyoming businesses leading the way.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise today to compliment two Wyoming ski resorts for their dedication to environmental excellence. Grand Targhee and Jackson Hole Mountain Resort each received the 2011 National Ski Areas Association Golden Eagle Award for Environmental Excellence. The Golden Eagle Award is the most prestigious environmental honor given by the ski industry.

Grand Targhee received the award in the small ski area category for their efforts to reduce energy consumption. Grand Targhee's stated goal was to reduce energy use by 10 percent below their previous 5-year average. By implementing better management practices, investing in energy-efficient upgrades and retrofits, and weatherizing their buildings, the resort almost doubled their original goal by realizing an 18 percent reduction in energy use. Environmental success is not new for Grand Targhee. In 2008 they received the Silver Eagle Award for Excellence

in Waste Reduction and Recycling, followed by their first Golden Eagle Award in 2009.

In the medium-sized ski area category, the Golden Eagle Award was presented to Jackson Hole Mountain Resort. This recognition is the result of a long-term dedication to environmental management. For the past 5 years, Jackson Hole Mountain Resort's environmental management system has met the 14001 standards for the International Organization for Standardization, ISO. This lofty benchmark has been achieved now by only two resorts in the United States. Jackson Hole Mountain Resort's steadfast approach to sustainable environmental management practices is an ongoing commitment. This award is the fourth time Jackson Hole Mountain Resort has been honored. In 1995 they also received the Golden Eagle Award, followed by Silver Eagle Awards for Excellence in Energy Conservation and Clean Energy and Excellence in Visual impact in 2003 and 2005, respectively.

Mr. President, Grand Targhee and Jackson Hole Mountain Resort's ongoing commitment to environmental excellence are outstanding examples of the private sector working to preserve our natural resources. Wyoming is a wonderful place to live, work, and recreate. I want to congratulate each resort and their employees for hard work and dedication. The National Ski Areas Association Golden Eagle Award is a tribute to their achievements. Because of their efforts, the natural wonder of Wyoming's landscapes will continue to be enjoyed now and in the future by those who ski our slopes.

REMEMBERING KIP TIERNAN

Mr. BROWN of Massachusetts. Mr. President, I rise today in tribute to Ms. Kip Tiernan of Boston, MA, who died on July 2. Kip was an immense force for good and a towering figure in the fight to better the lives of the less fortunate.

Kip Tiernan was, herself, accustomed to loss and struggle and redemption. A child of the Depression, Kip lost both parents by age 11 and was raised by her grandmother who taught her by example the importance of helping those in need. At a time when young women were discouraged from taking a stand or speaking out she was precocious, learning to fly a plane while still a teenager.

She led a remarkable life not just in spite of her own struggles but perhaps because of them. Her early years were marked by her own struggle with substance abuse. She spoke openly about the consequences of her drinking and how her recovery from alcoholism helped her to empathize with the women she would help.

Kip is best known for founding Rosie's Place in 1974, the Nation's first homeless shelter for women. Rosie's Place is a remarkable institution that has grown from simply providing emer-

gency shelter and a hot meal to assisting women of all ages to put their lives back together. Each year they serve nearly 75,000 meals, hand out tons of groceries, provide thousands of hours of counseling and educational services, help dozens of low-income homeowners to avoid eviction or find permanent housing, and deliver numerous other services to thousands of women.

In addition to Rosie's Place, Kip helped found the Boston Food Bank, the Boston Women's Fund, Community Works, Transition House, Aid to Incarcerated Mothers, Food for Free, Finex House, John Leary House, My Sister's Place, the Greater Boston Union of the Homeless, and numerous other organizations dedicated to providing immediate help and longer term assistance to the poor and homeless.

It is impossible to measure with any accuracy the impact of Rosie's Place and the many other organizations that Kip helped to found. We will never know just how many women were saved from dangerous streets or abusive relationships. Nor can we estimate how many children and families were spared the depravation and indignity of a life on the streets. We can never be sure how many people who were touched by Kip were inspired to go on to help others.

Kip once said: Compassion is a discipline; it's not just a smiley face. She knew that helping on a larger scale required organization. She used her own marketing and PR skills to raise money and awareness for various groups and knew that running increasingly sophisticated operations that served thousands required recruiting other professionals with their own God-given talents.

People may disagree about how best to fight poverty or help the neediest among us, but there should be no disagreement that Kip Tiernan transcended the disagreements and politics by committing herself to do the hard work, the sometimes uncomfortable work of demonstrating compassion and helping others one on one.

While some volunteer a day or two a year, Kip made it her life's work. Kip Tiernan leaves behind an incredible legacy of service and love. Our city, State, and world are far better places because of her.

MCCALL, IDAHO

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate and acknowledge the 100th anniversary of the founding of the city of McCall, ID. On July 19, 2011, the citizens of McCall will gather at Depot Park to commemorate the 100th year of its founding. This is a very historic and special day for this central Idaho community.

From its early days as a settlement in 1818, McCall has embodied the frontier spirit and entrepreneurship that makes the United States a land of opportunity. After a discovery of gold in the Salmon River Mountains, miners

advanced along the west side of Payette Lake, accelerating the construction of Warren Wagon Road. Around 1890, the town's namesake, Tom McCall, plotted a 4-block town site from his homestead on the south end of the lake, taking in the abandoned Lardo U.S. Post Office.

In the years following, there was an extraordinary amount of growth. Tom McCall bought the Warren Gold Dredging Company sawmill, thus initiating his lumber company that provided lumber for the manufacturing of business buildings, hotels, and homes until the 1970s. A school and post office were also established, with McCall naming himself postmaster. A few short years later, the town was officially incorporated on July 19, 1911.

In 1914, the railroad arrived in McCall bringing with it scores of tourists. McCall's picturesque location on the shores of Payette Lake and abundant snowfall and hot, dry summers make it a natural vacation destination. And yes, this glacially-carved lake, nearly 400 feet deep, is rumored to be the home of a sea serpent named "Sharlie," which has been sighted by tourists and locals alike over the past century.

The winter of '24 spawned the annual winter carnival. Its spectacular snow sculptures now draw thousands each year. Even Hollywood took notice of this beauty in 1938, when McCall served as the elaborate backdrop of the Academy Award-nominated movie, "Northwest Passage."

Today, McCall is known as an alluring all-season vacation destination anchored by historic Shore Lodge and the ski slopes at nearby Brundage Mountain, which forge the frontier spirit of its people and enhance its natural beauty. McCall has much to celebrate and look forward to in its next century.

Congratulations to the vibrant town of McCall for 100 years of success.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

PARKSTON, SOUTH DAKOTA

• Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the community of Parkston, SD, on reaching the 125th anniversary of its founding. This vibrant town in Hutchinson County truly is, as its motto states: "A Great Place to Grow."

Originally founded as Dakota City by Peter Swartz in 1880, Parkston as we know it today was moved to its current location in order to be closer to the Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad built running from Scotland to Mitchell. The town was thus renamed Parkston in honor of Edwin R. Parks, the resident engineer of that division of the railroad because, as the Dakota City Advance put it: "Mr. Parks is a first class fellow and Parkston is a first class town."

Today, as with many rural communities, Parkston takes particular pride

in their school system, home of the Trojans. Parkston students consistently rank high on achievement exams, a testament to their dedication to education. Local small businesses provide a continually growing economic sector for the town. Parkston is also known for the Klauss-James Archive & Art Museum, which houses the Klauss Archive of music manuscripts, and watercolors and drawings of Bernard Albert James. The citizens of Parkston plan to celebrate this milestone with many community events including a parade, live music, golf tournament, talent show, and an all-school reunion.

Over the past 125 years, Parkston has become a shining star in South Dakota. I commend small towns, such as Parkston, for their residents' sense of community pride and friendship that is evident to all. Congratulations to Parkston and their citizens for all their achievements, and I look forward to seeing what they will achieve in the future and wish them well on all their endeavors.●

TRENT, SOUTH DAKOTA

• Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Mr. President, today, I wish to pay tribute to the 125th anniversary of the founding of Trent, SD. Located along the historic Milwaukee Railroad line, Trent is a humble community in Moody County. On July 22 to 24, 2011, the citizens of Trent will celebrate their town's proud past and look forward to its promising future.

At the time of its founding in 1886, Trent was often referred to as Brookfield. The railroad requested that the town of Brookfield officially change its name to Trent in order to avoid confusion with a town of the same name on the line. In 1903, Trent was moved to higher ground east of the railroad tracks due to continual flooding. Today, Trent is home to a community pool, known as the "Swimming Hole," and numerous shops, restaurants, and other local businesses.

Trent will be commemorating 125 years of rich history with a community potluck, dance, and free swimming on Sunday. The community will celebrate with many activities including a fishing derby, parade, pork loin feed, horseshoes, mud volleyball, and even cardboard and duct tape boat races.

Trent continues to grow and thrive, even 125 years after its founding. I congratulate the residents of Trent, SD as they celebrate the town's quasicentennial and wish them continued success and prosperity in the years to come. It is truly an honor and a privilege to represent the people of the exceptional town of Trent.●

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 4:20 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 1309. An act to extend the authorization of the national flood insurance program, to achieve reforms to improve the financial integrity and stability of the program, and to increase the role of private markets in the management of flood insurance risk, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bill was read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 1309. An act to extend the authorization of the national flood insurance program, to achieve reforms to improve the financial integrity and stability of the program, and to increase the role of private markets in the management of flood insurance risk, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mrs. GILLIBRAND (for herself and Mr. SANDERS):

S. 1352. A bill to amend the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users to include freight and passenger rail among eligible uses of funding under the coordinated border infrastructure program and to reauthorize that program; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. WICKER (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. PAUL):

S. 1353. A bill to exclude employees of the Transportation Security Administration from the collective bargaining rights of Federal employees and provide employment rights and an employee engagement mechanism for passenger and property screeners; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mrs. HAGAN:

S. 1354. A bill to authorize grants to promote media literacy and youth empowerment programs, to authorize research on the role and impact of depictions of girls and women in the media, to provide for the establishment of a National Task Force on Girls and Women in the Media, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself and Mr. DURBIN):

S. 1355. A bill to regulate political robocalls; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

By Mr. BROWN of Massachusetts (for himself, Mr. WYDEN, and Mr. MCCAIN):

S. 1356. A bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to encourage States to increase generic drug utilization under Medicaid, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. BEGICH (for himself and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 1357. A bill to exempt National Forest System land in the State of Alaska from the Roadless Area Conservation Rule; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. TESTER:

S. 1358. A bill to amend the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 to provide leave because of the death of a son or daughter; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. TESTER (for himself and Mr. BEGICH):

S. 1359. A bill to make the National Parks and Federal Recreation Lands Pass available at a discount to members of the Armed Forces and veterans; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. BROWN of Ohio, and Mrs. FEINSTEIN):

S. 1360. A bill to amend the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 to require shareholder authorization before a public company may make certain political expenditures, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. KERRY:

S. 1361. A bill to reduce human exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. WEBB:

S. 1362. A bill to simplify the Trafficking in Persons Report by reducing the number of country categories and ranking countries within each category according to their relative adherence to the minimum standards set forth in section 108 of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7106); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. ROCKEFELLER:

S. 1363. A bill to amend titles 10 and 41, United States Code, to allow contracting officers to consider information regarding domestic employment before awarding a Federal contract, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. NELSON of Florida:

S. 1364. A bill to ensure the timely payment of Social Security benefits in August 2011; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mrs. HUTCHISON:

S. 1365. A bill to provide funds to ensure that members of the Armed Forces, including reserve components thereof, and supporting civilian personnel continue to receive pay and allowances for active service performed when a funding gap caused by the failure to enact interim or full-year appropriations for the Armed Forces occurs, which results in the furlough of non-emergency personnel and the curtailment of Government activities and services; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Ms. CANTWELL (for herself, Mr. CRAPO, and Mrs. MURRAY):

S. 1366. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to broaden the special rules for certain governmental plans under section 105(j) to include plans established by political subdivisions; to the Committee on Finance.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself and Mr. COBURN):

S. Res. 232. A resolution recognizing the continued persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China on the 12th anniversary of the campaign by the Chinese Communist Party to suppress the Falun Gong movement, recognizing the Tuidang movement whereby Chinese citizens renounce their ties to the Chinese Communist Party and its affiliates, and calling for an immediate end to the campaign to persecute Falun Gong practitioners; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. NELSON of Florida (for himself, Mr. BROWN of Ohio, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. WARNER, and Mr. VITTER):

S. Res. 233. A resolution honoring the men and women of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Space Shuttle Program on reaching the historic milestone of the 135th and final flight of the Space Transportation System; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 44

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. KOHL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 44, a bill to amend part D of title XVIII of the Social Security Act to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate covered part D drug prices on behalf of Medicare beneficiaries.

S. 48

At the request of Mr. INOUE, the names of the Senator from Nevada (Mr. REID) and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) were added as cosponsors of S. 48, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for the participation of pharmacists in National Health Services Corps programs, and for other purposes.

S. 82

At the request of Mr. JOHANNES, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 82, a bill to repeal the sunset of the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001 with respect to the expansion of the adoption credit and adoption assistance programs, to repeal the sunset of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act with respect to increased dollar limitations for such credit and programs, and to allow the adoption credit to be claimed in the year expenses are incurred, regardless of when the adoption becomes final.

S. 133

At the request of Mrs. MCCASKILL, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 133, a bill to repeal the provision of law that provides automatic pay adjustments for Members of Congress.

S. 164

At the request of Mr. BROWN of Massachusetts, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. PRYOR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 164, a bill to repeal the imposition of withholding on certain payments made to vendors by government entities.

S. 384

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the names of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE), the Senator from Iowa (Mr. HARKIN) and the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. BINGAMAN) were added as cosponsors of S. 384, a bill to amend title 39, United States Code, to extend the authority of the United States Postal Service to issue a semipostal to raise funds for breast cancer research.

S. 412

At the request of Mr. LEVIN, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) was added as a cosponsor of S. 412, a bill to ensure that amounts credited to the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund are used for harbor maintenance.

S. 534

At the request of Mr. KERRY, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. PRYOR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 534, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide a reduced rate of excise tax on beer produced domestically by certain small producers.

S. 539

At the request of Mr. WHITEHOUSE, the names of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. AKAKA) and the Senator from Alaska (Mr. BEGICH) were added as cosponsors of S. 539, a bill to amend the Public Health Services Act and the Social Security Act to extend health information technology assistance eligibility to behavioral health, mental health, and substance abuse professionals and facilities, and for other purposes.

S. 745

At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 745, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to protect certain veterans who would otherwise be subject to a reduction in educational assistance benefits, and for other purposes.

S. 800

At the request of Mr. HARKIN, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 800, a bill to amend the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users to reauthorize and improve the safe routes to school program.

S. 807

At the request of Mr. ENZI, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. COATS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 807, a bill to authorize the Department of Labor's voluntary protection program and to expand the program to include more small businesses.

S. 838

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 838, a bill to amend the Toxic Substances Control Act to clarify the jurisdiction of the Environmental Protection Agency with respect to certain sporting good articles, and to exempt those articles from a definition under that Act.

S. 906

At the request of Mr. WICKER, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 906, a bill to prohibit taxpayer funded abortions and to provide for conscience protections, and for other purposes.

S. 968

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, the name of the Senator from Maryland

(Mr. CARDIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 968, a bill to prevent online threats to economic creativity and theft of intellectual property, and for other purposes.

S. 1048

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. PRYOR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1048, a bill to expand sanctions imposed with respect to the Islamic Republic of Iran, North Korea, and Syria, and for other purposes.

S. 1049

At the request of Mr. KYL, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1049, a bill to lower health premiums and increase choice for small business.

S. 1107

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. INOUE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1107, a bill to authorize and support psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis data collection, to express the sense of the Congress to encourage and leverage public and private investment in psoriasis research with a particular focus on interdisciplinary collaborative research on the relationship between psoriasis and its comorbid conditions, and for other purposes.

S. 1147

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1147, a bill to amend the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Programs Enhancement Act of 2001 and title 38, United States Code, to require the provision of chiropractic care and service to veterans at all Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers and to expand access to such care and services, and for other purposes.

S. 1228

At the request of Mr. WHITEHOUSE, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1228, a bill to prohibit trafficking in counterfeit military goods or services.

S. 1251

At the request of Mr. CARPER, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1251, a bill to amend title XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act to curb waste, fraud, and abuse in the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

S. 1257

At the request of Mr. BINGAMAN, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1257, a bill to establish grant programs to improve the health of border area residents and for all hazards preparedness in the border area including bioterrorism and infectious disease, and for other purposes.

S. 1265

At the request of Mr. BINGAMAN, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a co-

sponsor of S. 1265, a bill to amend the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 to provide consistent and reliable authority for, and for the funding of, the land and water conservation fund to maximize the effectiveness of the fund for future generations, and for other purposes.

S. 1280

At the request of Mr. ISAKSON, the names of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) and the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. NELSON) were added as cosponsors of S. 1280, a bill to amend the Peace Corps Act to require sexual assault risk-reduction and response training, and the development of sexual assault protocol and guidelines, the establishment of victims' advocates, the establishment of a Sexual Assault Advisory Council, and for other purposes.

S. 1292

At the request of Mr. TOOMEY, the names of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) and the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO) were added as cosponsors of S. 1292, a bill to require the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency to consider the impact on employment levels and economic activity prior to issuing a regulation, policy statement, guidance document, endangerment finding, or other requirement, implementing any new or substantially altered program, or denying any permit, and for other purposes.

S. 1297

At the request of Mr. BURR, the names of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) and the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. DEMINT) were added as cosponsors of S. 1297, a bill to preserve State and institutional authority relating to State authorization and the definition of credit hour.

S. 1308

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO) was withdrawn as a cosponsor of S. 1308, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, with respect to child pornography and child exploitation offenses.

S. 1313

At the request of Mr. WHITEHOUSE, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1313, a bill to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to reauthorize the National Estuary Program, and for other purposes.

S. 1316

At the request of Mr. ENZI, the name of the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1316, a bill to prevent a fiscal crisis by enacting legislation to balance the Federal budget through reductions of discretionary and mandatory spending.

S. 1340

At the request of Mr. LEE, the names of the Senator from Texas (Mr. COR-

NYN), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) and the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. JOHANNIS) were added as cosponsors of S. 1340, a bill to cut, cap, and balance the Federal budget.

S. 1341

At the request of Mr. SESSIONS, the names of the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON) and the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL) were added as cosponsors of S. 1341, a bill to provide a point of order against consideration of any measure that would increase the statutory limit on the public debt above \$14.294 trillion unless that measure has been publicly available for a full 7 calendar days before consideration on the floor of the Senate.

S.J. RES. 17

At the request of Mr. MCCONNELL, the names of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) and the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) were added as cosponsors of S.J. Res. 17, a joint resolution approving the renewal of import restrictions contained in the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003.

S.J. RES. 19

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 19, a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States authorizing Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States.

S. RES. 175

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Mr. BEGICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 175, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate with respect to ongoing violations of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia and the importance of a peaceful and just resolution to the conflict within Georgia's internationally recognized borders.

S. RES. 226

At the request of Mr. GRAHAM, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 226, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that the President does not have the authority to ignore the statutory debt limit by ordering the Secretary of the Treasury to continue issuing debt on the full faith and credit of the United States.

S. RES. 228

At the request of Mr. LAUTENBERG, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. BROWN) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 228, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate regarding coming together as a Nation and ceasing all work or other activity for a moment of remembrance beginning at 1:00 PM Eastern Daylight Time on September 11, 2011, in honor of the

10th anniversary of the terrorist attacks committed against the United States on September 11, 2001.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself and Mr. DURBIN):

S. 1355. A bill to regulate political robocalls; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, today I am introducing the Robocall Privacy Act, a simple, straight-forward bill that would allow continued political outreach through prerecorded phone messages, but protect American families from being inundated by calls throughout the day and night. I am pleased to be joined by Senator DURBIN.

In recent years, we have seen an increase in the development of new technologies that help political candidates reach out to voters. This is a good thing. Political speech is essential and should be protected. The vast majority of these developments strengthen the Democratic process by promoting an interchange of information and ideas.

One of these developments is the robocall—a prerecorded message that can be sent out to tens of thousands of voters at a minor cost through computer automation. With television and radio ads becoming so expensive, these prerecorded calls can play an important role in alerting voters to a candidate's position and urging their support at the polls.

But the process can be abused. Throughout recent elections, we have continued to hear stories about people being inundated with phone calls throughout the day and night. There is simply no good reason why Americans wanting a good night's sleep should be awakened at 4:30 in the morning by a robocall.

Commercial calls are already limited by the Federal Trade Commission's "Do Not Call" list, which millions of individuals have registered for. But political calls are specifically exempted from this list.

Let me be clear: I am not seeking to eliminate all robocalls. Instead, this legislation is carefully designed to provide some safeguards. Let me tell you exactly what this bill would do.

It would ban political robocalls between the hours of 9 p.m. and 8 a.m.

It would ban any campaign or group from making more than two robocalls to the same telephone number in a single day.

It would prohibit the organizer of any robocall from blocking the "caller identification" number and require an announcement at the beginning of the call identifying the individual or organization making the call, and the fact that it is a prerecorded message. This is to prevent robocalls from misleading the recipient of the call.

The enforcement provisions of this bill are simple and directed toward stopping the worst of these calls. The

bill would create a civil fine for violators of the law, with additional fines for callers who willfully violate the law.

The bill also allows voters to sue to stop those calls immediately, but not receive monetary damages. A judge can order violators of the law to stop these abusive calls.

Let me briefly describe a few incidents that showcase why the provisions in this bill are so important.

On Election Day in 2010, over 110,000 Maryland voters began receiving anonymous robocalls instructing them to "relax" and stay home because Governor Martin O'Malley had already won re-election. These calls came a full two hours before the polls would close.

Days before the 2010 Midterm elections, voters in Kansas received anonymous robocalls telling them to bring a voter registration card and proof of home ownership to the polls on Wednesday. Not only are these items not required to vote, but as we know, the election was on a Tuesday.

Similarly, in my home state of California, about two dozen Los Angeles residents complained of receiving Spanish language robocalls from an unidentifiable source instructing them to vote on Wednesday, November 3—the day after Election Day.

Shortly before last year's elections, individuals in St. Louis, Missouri, heard their phones ring and checked the caller ID to find a number belonging to a local hospital. Expecting the worst, they answered the call. The voice on the other end was not a hospital employee, but rather a prerecorded political message from an organization that had been able to manipulate caller ID devices to make it seem as if the calls were coming from emergency officials.

In October 2010, 50,000 Nevadans were awoken at 1 a.m. by a robocall regarding a ballot question in the state that would change the judicial selection process. The calls came in the middle of the night due to a programming error—they were supposed to be made at 1 p.m.

To be clear, incidences like these involving the malicious or untimely use of robocalls are not unique to the recent election.

In a Maryland race in November 2006, in a conservative area residents received a middle-of-the-night robocall from the nonexistent "Gay and Lesbian Push Organization," urging them to support one of the candidates. That candidate lost the election, in part because of the false, late-night call.

In the 2006 Congressional elections, many calls wrongly implied that one candidate was making a robocall. The message began with a recorded voice stating that the call contained information about U.S. Representative Melissa Bean. Some voters called Bean's office to complain without listening to the entire message, which eventually identified an opposing party committee as the sponsor—when most voters had

hung up. Representative Bean had to spend campaign funds informing voters she had not made that call.

I am a strong supporter of the First Amendment protection for political speech, but the worst of these calls are disturbing people in their homes and spreading misleading and outright false information. Something must be done to rein in the robocalls which perpetrate these actions.

This bill presents a solution. It does not ban robocalls. It merely provides a reasonable framework of tailored time, place, and manner restrictions.

I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting the Robocall Privacy Act.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 1355

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Robocall Privacy Act of 2011".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Abusive political robocalls harass voters and discourage them from participating in the political process.

(2) Abusive political robocalls infringe on the privacy rights of individuals by disturbing them in their homes.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

For purposes of this Act—

(1) **POLITICAL ROBOCALL.**—The term "political robocall" means any outbound telephone call—

(A) in which a person is not available to speak with the person answering the call, and the call instead plays a recorded message; and

(B) which promotes, supports, attacks, or opposes a candidate for Federal office.

(2) **IDENTITY.**—The term "identity" means, with respect to any individual making a political robocall or causing a political robocall to be made, the name of the sponsor or originator of the call.

(3) **SPECIFIED PERIOD.**—The term "specified period" means, with respect to any candidate for Federal office who is promoted, supported, attacked, or opposed in a political robocall—

(A) the 60-day period ending on the date of any general, special, or run-off election for the office sought by such candidate; and

(B) the 30-day period ending on the date of any primary or preference election, or any convention or caucus of a political party that has authority to nominate a candidate, for the office sought by such candidate.

(4) **OTHER DEFINITIONS.**—The terms "candidate" and "Federal office" have the respective meanings given such terms under section 301 of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 (2 U.S.C. 431).

SEC. 4. REGULATION OF POLITICAL ROBOCALLS.

It shall be unlawful for any person during the specified period to make a political robocall or to cause a political robocall to be made—

(1) to any person during the period beginning at 9 p.m. and ending at 8 a.m. in the place which the call is directed;

(2) to the same telephone number more than twice on the same day;

(3) without disclosing, at the beginning of the call—

(A) that the call is a recorded message; and
(B) the identity of the person making the call or causing the call to be made; or

(4) without transmitting the telephone number and the name of the person making the political robocall or causing the political robocall to be made to the caller identification service of the recipient.

SEC. 5. ENFORCEMENT.

(a) ENFORCEMENT BY FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Any person aggrieved by a violation of section 4 may file a complaint with the Federal Election Commission under rules similar to the rules under section 309(a) of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 (2 U.S.C. 437g(a)).

(2) CIVIL PENALTY.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—If the Federal Election Commission or any court determines that there has been a violation of section 4, there shall be imposed a civil penalty of not more than \$1,000 per violation.

(B) WILLFUL VIOLATIONS.—In the case the Federal Election Commission or any court determines that there has been a knowing or willful violation of section 4, the amount of any civil penalty under subparagraph (A) for such violation may be increased to not more than 300 percent of the amount under subparagraph (A).

(b) PRIVATE RIGHT OF ACTION.—Any person may bring in an appropriate district court of the United States an action based on a violation of section 4 to enjoin such violation without regard to whether such person has filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission.

By Mr. BEGICH (for himself and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 1357. A bill to exempt National Forest System land in the State of Alaska from the Roadless Area Conservation Rule; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, I wish to speak about legislation I am introducing today that would repeal an ill-fitting and broad-reaching rule that limits not only timber harvest and mining but important renewable energy projects in Southeast Alaska.

In March of this year, a Federal District Court ruling set aside the 2003 Tongass Exemption and reinstated the application of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule in the Tongass National Forest. This decision means that the Tongass National Forest is now managed by a cookie-cutter rule imposed upon all national forests rather than by the 2008 Tongass Land Management Plan developed by Forest Service personnel under a wide reaching multi-year collaboration with Alaskans.

This will have a severe impact and reverse efforts to revitalize local communities and increase economic diversification throughout the region. Over the past few months, I have spoken with Tongass Forest Supervisor Forest Cole and Department of Agriculture staff about what flexibility they have under the rule.

I appreciate that Secretary Vilsack and the plaintiffs in this most recent court case recognize the importance of hydropower development, mining and personal use wood policies to the economy of Southeast Alaska. However, what I have read of their settlement

agreement doesn't offer any certainty that there won't be more challenges and delays. Our experience over the past decade suggests there will be.

With lots of demands on the Tongass Forest, the Forest Service needs greater flexibility to address these issues while crafting a reasonably sized timber sale program that keeps the few existing mills alive and allows for modest expansion into second growth markets. Unemployment in the rural portions of Southeast Alaska currently averages more than 15 percent. Energy costs in these non-hydropower communities are too high as well. Instead of adding options, the roadless rule takes them away. It is time once and for all to do away with the rule in Alaska.

I want to thank my colleague, Senator MURKOWSKI, for joining me as a cosponsor.

By Mr. KERRY:

S. 1361. A bill to reduce human exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, today I am introducing the Endocrine-Disrupting Chemicals Exposure Elimination Act to create a research program through the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to further endocrine related research.

There are approximately 80,000 known chemicals in our environment that are potentially harmful. Many of those chemicals have never been tested to determine if they are damaging to human health. Products that American families use every day such as household cleaners, cosmetics, and personal care products could actually be causing them harm.

This legislation establishes the Endocrine Disruption Expert Panel to study and evaluate up to 10 chemicals per year that are potentially endocrine-disrupting to determine whether they have a high, substantial, minimal, or no level of concern. Any chemical that is deemed a high level of concern could be banned from use within 2 years. This commonsense approach provides vital protections against harmful chemicals while giving industry an opportunity to either find a way to eliminate human exposure to the toxin or eliminate it from use.

The increased rate of disorders affecting the human endocrine system is alarming. Children developing in the womb are particularly vulnerable. Many scientists believe there are connections between effects on the endocrine system and the chemicals around us, and it is time to do more about it.

This bill promotes action based on hard, scientific evidence. I urge all my colleagues to support it.

By Mr. ROCKEFELLER:

S. 1363. A bill to amend titles 10 and 41, United States Code, to allow contracting officers to consider information regarding domestic employment

before awarding a Federal contract, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, today I am introducing the American Jobs Matter Act, legislation that will promote domestic job creation in the field of Federal contracting.

We must do all that we can to stop the outward migration of jobs. This bill takes the important step of directing the Federal Government to notify contract applicants that it may consider American job impact when deciding which bids to accept. The government would then be allowed to use that information in making award decisions.

There should be no greater champion of American-made goods than the Federal Government. Members of Congress come from 50 States and 435 districts and we each know of the special skill sets that our constituents possess and how fortunate the Federal Government would be to have these employees working on Federal projects. Yet our flawed procurement policy has no mechanism to assess the impact of government purchasing on American jobs.

This bill seeks to change that. Under the American Jobs Matter Act, contractors will be allowed to submit information related to the net effect of their offer on American employment. This information could include the number of American jobs expected to be created or retained as a result of the work. Bidders would also be allowed to guarantee that the jobs created would not be moved outside the United States after the contract is awarded. The legislation would finally give Federal agencies the ability to assess the impact of procurement decisions on American jobs. It does not dictate that a contract go to the applicant that will create the most jobs. It just elevates job creation to its right place in the hierarchy of criteria that should be studied before making a decision.

The American Jobs Matter Act would be an important step towards promoting a vibrant manufacturing base which is essential to our standard of living, the health of our communities, and ensuring our long-term economic security.

I want to thank my counterpart from the House of Representatives, Representative CHRIS MURPHY, for his leadership in that body on this legislation. I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this important legislation and thank the chair for allowing me to speak on this issue.

By Mr. NELSON of Florida:

S. 1364. A bill to ensure the timely payment of Social Security benefits in August 2011; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, the Budget Committee chairman, the Senator from North Dakota, has, in fact, laid out a budget. It puts us on a serious road toward budget balance by utilizing real numbers, not sleight of

hand numbers, not budget fakery numbers, not a budget as a political document but a budget as an economic document. And it nips—indeed, it savages—the annual deficit and the Federal debt of \$4 trillion over 10 years.

This is real money, and it is real money that is basically in balance between \$2 trillion of spending cuts—which we have had all of those kinds of talks going on down at the White House, and they seem to get to an agreement of \$2 trillion of spending cuts. But when it comes to the revenue side, there seems to be an unwillingness to accept revenues.

What I would like to do is elucidate further on the Budget Committee chairman's presentation yesterday or the day before of this budget on how we can produce \$2 trillion of new revenue and it not be considered as just straight tax increases but, instead, of going to two other parts of the Tax Code that have been off limits to so much of the tax planning and tax cuts that we have been talking about. Of course, I am talking about the \$14 trillion of tax expenditures that the Federal Government expends by not having that tax revenue coming in to the tune of \$14 trillion for special tax preferences over the course of the next decade.

Now, if that were not enough in itself, there is also an additional \$1 trillion that is money that is kept abroad that is not brought back into this country and, therefore, is not taxed. Just a little portion of that money being kept overseas could be brought in and used in productive activities in the United States. But it would be brought in as income instead of housed in one three-story building in the Cayman Islands for 18,000 corporations, where all it is is a residence for a corporation to use to avoid U.S. taxes.

Now, if we are going to do anything serious about lowering the deficit, we are going to have to try to stop this nonsense that is going on. In the case of tax preferences, the tax expenditures, the \$14 trillion, the Senate, in an overwhelming vote a couple of weeks ago, actually attacked one of those tax preferences.

Remember when we voted something like 95 to 5 here to get rid of the subsidy on ethanol made from corn? It was a subsidy put in years ago to encourage ethanol made from corn as a way of blending it with gasoline that would then lessen our reliance on oil, particularly foreign oil. But now we know we can make ethanol from a whole bunch of other things, and it doesn't have to be making ethanol from something that we eat, which all it was doing was driving the price of corn higher and, of course, corn is being used as a feed in the feed lots and, therefore, the meat products that the American consumer was getting at the grocery store went much higher in price.

So we realized here was a tax subsidy, a tax preference, in other words, a

tax expenditure, that had outlived its usefulness. There are \$14 trillion of these tax preferences that are, in effect, for the next decade, and it would not be an unreasonable question to ask: Could we reduce those tax preferences just a little bit? If you reduced them, just 17 percent of all those tax preferences, you would produce \$2 trillion. If that \$1 trillion that is kept overseas—if you could stop some of those laws that keep foreign income held by U.S. companies abroad, if you could just tax a little bit of that, then we could even lower the percentage that we needed to get into the tax expenditures.

Now, there are some tax expenditures that are obviously very popular and very necessary. Charitable contributions, which include contributions to churches, they get a charitable deduction that you deduct from your overall income in order to get your adjusted gross income. From that you subtract the various deductions you have to get to your taxable income. Clearly, giving charitable contributions is an activity that we want to encourage, and we encourage that in the Tax Code.

Another example is, you own a home. You go to the bank, you get a mortgage, the mortgage payments that include principal and interest. You are able to deduct the interest that you are paying on that mortgage, and that is a tax preference. It was originally put in to encourage home ownership. Well, should that preference continue for those who don't need the help?

I think these are questions. So if we start just doing little things with this \$14 trillion of tax preferences, we can make major reductions in the annual deficit.

Let me give another example: Oil and gas. There are a lot of tax preferences for the oil and gas industry. Normally, when a business goes in and provides capital to get a business up and going, that capital equipment is allowed to be deducted over the life of that piece of equipment.

Well, so much of oil and gas equipment is allowed to be written off in the very first year as an expense of doing business in that first year. That is just one other example. So if we look at it, are we capable of taking \$14 trillion of tax preferences—some people call them tax expenditures; some people call them tax giveaways—and, therefore, reduce those, especially the ones that are ineffective and inefficient, even though it is going to step on somebody's toes? Some special interest that has that tax preference, they are not going to like it. They want their goodies. But for the purpose of balancing the budget, for the purpose of bringing this deficit down so we can get on the road to fiscal order instead of the fiscal chaos that we have now, is that not a legitimate question to ask and a legitimate road to go down?

No less than one of the senior economic advisers to President Reagan—his name is Martin Feldstein. He was a

Harvard professor and the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers to President Reagan. I want you to see what he says about reducing tax expenditures.

Cutting tax expenditures is really the best way to reduce government spending. Eliminating tax expenditures does not increase marginal tax rates or reduce the reward for saving, investment or risk-taking. It would also increase overall economic efficiency by removing incentives that distort private spending decisions. And eliminating or consolidating the large number of overlapping tax-based subsidies would also greatly simplify tax filing. In short, cutting tax expenditures is not at all like other ways of raising revenue.

Martin Feldstein, well regarded in conservative circles.

With this crisis looming, why can't we get people to recognize that if we want balance, they have to give, too, and here is a good way. I want to expand on this—another way we could do it.

We could actually, as the Simpson-Bowles commission suggested, lower these tax expenditures Martin Feldstein is talking about. We could even take that additional revenue and pour it into the rest of the Tax Code and lower the tax rates for everybody, including corporate tax rates, and in the process we could also simplify the Tax Code into three tax brackets. All of the tax brackets would be lowered if we got rid of some of those tax expenditures. There are multiple ways we can use this, and in the process, then, we are starting some serious tax reform.

The Senator from North Dakota has laid this out. He has explained this to the Senate. He has the unanimous support of the majority of the Senate Budget Committee. He has the near-unanimous support of the entire majority in the U.S. Senate. He has explained this to the President and to the Vice President.

Of course, one of the easy ways to react to this is, well, there is not enough time. If we want to do major tax reform and tax simplification for the sake of our consumers, there sure is time because we could solve this debt ceiling crisis with a commitment down the line to doing just exactly what I have talked about.

As we are in this maelstrom of all of these different ideas going around about what we are going to do before August 2 so the debt ceiling can be raised and so the country can pay its bills, I have heard about some disturbing things out there on the horizon. One is that Social Security is going to get whacked and that Medicare is going to get whacked.

By the way, what the Budget Committee is proposing does not whack Social Security or Medicare providers. In the first place, Social Security is not in financial trouble in the foreseeable future. It is not until the late 2030s that it starts to get into difficulty. It is around 2035 that it would not, in that year, be able to pay 100 percent of its payments. We can correct that before then.

Our problem is now. Our problem is this next decade of bringing this budget on a path toward balance and bringing the annual deficit down to a much lower percentage of gross domestic product.

The budget I have just outlined, that is the work product of the Senate Budget Committee chairman, brings it down at the end of the decade to 1.8 percent—the deficit—to GDP. Anytime we get below 3 percent of the deficit being a percentage of GDP, we are on the path to fiscal stability, and we would be moving toward that position of balance—a position, by the way, we enjoyed 11 years ago because we were in surplus. Eleven years ago, we had 4 years of surplus in a row, but we started enacting policies—and, I might say, not with the vote of this Senator—that caused the revenues to drop off considerably. Then, of course, when we got in the situation where we started increasing expenditures for one reason or another—increasing expenditures for national defense, for two wars—and those were wars we were not paying for with a revenue source; in fact, we were just going out and borrowing the money.

So this brings me now to Medicare and Social Security. It might make some people in Washington, DC, feel good to whack Medicare. It certainly wouldn't make this Senator feel good. It certainly wouldn't make an awful lot—as a matter of fact, some 45 million senior citizens in this country are on Medicare, some of whom are living from hand to mouth, from Social Security check to Social Security check, and from Medicare reimbursement to Medicare reimbursement for their health care. It certainly wouldn't make them feel good. And it is not going to do anything immediately for the deficit we are having to confront. So why trade off, saying we are going to whack these two programs and not attack things such as tax expenditures that are inefficient and don't produce what they are supposed to do via the incentives in the Tax Code? It simply doesn't make sense.

Oh, by the way, isn't it interesting, isn't it almost ironic that the people who are now attacking Medicare and saying we have to whack it are the very people who were criticizing us 2 years ago in the health care bill when we eliminated \$½ trillion of inefficiencies and overpayments out of Medicare to put the program on a more financially solvent path? And they were the very ones who were criticizing us for taking that money out of Medicare. Well, I say to my colleagues, we already took on Medicare, so we ought to get down to the hard choices of budget deficit reduction, which means cutting spending and getting rid of some of these tax expenditures so we can start bringing our budget into balance.

My final subject is Social Security. Now, why in the world would we want to scare the bejabbers out of 45 million senior citizens of this country, some of whom literally are living hand to

mouth and from Social Security check to Social Security check and some of whom cannot afford the cost of drugs even partially provided for through Medicare Part D, the prescription drug benefit? I don't think we want to do that.

As we get closer to August 2, I am hearing—and I hope every other Senator is hearing from all of these senior citizens and these disabled workers who are relying on Social Security—that they are concerned about Washington's failure to get its house in order, and if we fail to get our house in order, it is going to threaten the very source of income they count on. So to risk a government default and to say the only way we can do it is by taking it out of Social Security is not going to do anything for us in reducing the deficit over the next decade, which is the problem at hand.

Yesterday, the President was asked if he could tell the folks at home that no matter what happens, Social Security checks are going to go out the day after the government is supposedly going to go into default. Do my colleagues remember what the President said? He said: I cannot guarantee that those checks go out on August 3 if we haven't resolved this issue because there may simply not be the money in the coffers to do it.

So the people who are relying on a fixed income of Social Security to survive—Social Security payments are more than just a government statistic. For them, Social Security is more than just a Federal outlay or an entitlement expenditure. There are almost 4 million Social Security beneficiaries in my State. I can tell my colleagues that their Social Security pays the rent, it pays for the groceries, and it helps pay their medical copays. It helps pay for that over and above what is provided in Medicare.

It is interesting, these speeches I hear. It is all “it is your fault, and it is your fault, and it is the other guy's fault, and it is so partisan, and it is so ideologically rigid.” The only way we are going to solve something that is as tangled up as this is for people of good will to be willing to respect the other fellow's point of view and come together and build consensus to find a workable solution.

So as we get closer—and we can almost hear the background music; it is getting more ominous day by day as the clock ticks down to August 2—there is something we can do about it. The threat that Social Security payments could be delayed should not be used as a weapon to force a slash-and-burn cut to these entitlements. I said 45 million earlier; it is actually 56 million retirees who rely on these payments.

A recent report from the Congressional Research Service states:

Under normal procedures Treasury pays Social Security benefits from the General Fund and offsets this by redeeming an equivalent amount of the Social Security Trust

Funds' holdings of government debt. Treasury now may need to issue new public debt to raise the cash needed to pay benefits. Treasury may be unable to issue new public debt, however, because of the debt limit.

In other words, if the debt ceiling is not raised, Social Security benefits could be delayed or jeopardized. So perhaps what we ought to do is enact some legislation that takes Social Security out of the equation in the event we don't reach a deal on the debt ceiling by August 2.

In the past, the President and the Congress have agreed to exempt Social Security from the debt ceiling in order to ensure that the payments go out to Social Security recipients. As a matter of fact, as recently as 1996, Treasury reported it had insufficient cash to pay Social Security benefits in March of that year. In response, Congress then passed—and it was a bipartisan Congress; it was headed by a majority of the Republican Party, and there was a Democratic President, President Clinton. They passed—and it was signed into law—a measure that provided the Treasury with temporary authority to issue securities to the public in the amount equal to the Social Security benefit payments due.

I will conclude by pointing out that after that was done in 1996, Congress later extended the borrowing authority for an additional 2 weeks.

I believe we should use what we know works and not play games with Social Security benefits. So I am introducing some legislation, and I am introducing it today. It is called the Social Security Benefit Protection Act. What it suggests is the way we ought to go. Now, I know we are not going to take up and pass this legislation, but I have a means by which I can get this idea out. What it does is guarantee that the Social Security Administration will be able to continue paying Social Security benefits to retirees, survivors, and disabled workers regardless of what happens to this political gridlock here in Washington.

Similar to the 1996 legislation, this legislation gives the Treasury Department temporary authority to issue new debt to ensure the payments can be made to Social Security beneficiaries, but only to the extent necessary to cover the needs of the Social Security Program.

I urge our colleagues to try to come together and give the assurances to millions of retirees that they are not going to be whacked and, especially so, they are not going to be whacked out of political gridlock by all the rest of us for these excessive reasons. I urge my colleagues to take a look at the ideas in this legislation that I have filed.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 232—RECOGNIZING THE CONTINUED PERSECUTION OF FALUN GONG PRACTITIONERS IN CHINA ON THE 12TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CAMPAIGN BY THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY TO SUPPRESS THE FALUN GONG MOVEMENT, RECOGNIZING THE TUIDANG MOVEMENT WHEREBY CHINESE CITIZENS RENOUNCE THEIR TIES TO THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS AFFILIATES, AND CALLING FOR AN IMMEDIATE END TO THE CAMPAIGN TO PERSECUTE FALUN GONG PRACTITIONERS

Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself and Mr. COBURN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 232

Whereas Falun Gong (also known as Falun Dafa) is a Chinese spiritual discipline founded by Li Hongzhi in 1992 that consists of spiritual and moral teachings, meditation, and exercise based upon the universal principles of truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance;

Whereas, during the mid-1990s, Falun Gong acquired a large and diverse following, with as many as 70,000,000 practitioners at its peak;

Whereas, on April 25, 1999, an estimated 10,000 to 30,000 Falun Gong practitioners gathered in Beijing to protest growing restrictions by the Government of the People's Republic of China on the activities of Falun Gong practitioners, and the Government of the People's Republic of China responded with an intensive, comprehensive, and unforgiving campaign against the movement that began on July 20, 1999, with the outlawing of Falun Gong;

Whereas the Government of the People's Republic of China has stated that it fully respects and protects citizen's freedom of religion in accordance with the law, but that "Falun Gong is neither a religion nor a spiritual movement; rather it is an evil cult against humanity, science and society";

Whereas, on October 30, 1999, China's National People's Congress promulgated an "anti-cult" law (Article 300 of the Criminal Law), effective retroactively, to suppress the Falun Gong movement and thousands of religious sects across the country;

Whereas, since 1999, more than 6,000 Falun Gong practitioners have reportedly served time in prison, with estimates of those in re-education through labor camps reaching as many as 125,000 people, and Falun Gong practitioners are said to constitute approximately two-thirds of all prisoners and detainees of conscience in China (roughly 15,000 people);

Whereas the publication of "Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party" in November 2004 by the United States-based newspaper, the Epoch Times, led to the creation of the Tuidang movement;

Whereas the Tuidang movement, which translates literally as "withdraw from the communist party", has encouraged as many as 90,000,000 people to publicly renounce their membership in the Chinese Communist Party and its affiliates since 2004;

Whereas, in the lead up to and during the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai, authorities conducted propaganda campaigns portraying "cults" like Falun Gong as "dangers" to so-

ciety that "wreck families" and "poison the minds of youth", carried out strict surveillance of practitioners, and detained and imprisoned large numbers of practitioners;

Whereas, according to estimates by the Department of State and human rights organizations, since 1999, from several hundred to a few thousand Falun Gong adherents have died in custody from torture, abuse, and neglect;

Whereas a review of the Government of the People's Republic of China by the United Nations Human Rights Council's Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review in February 2009 reiterated concerns regarding human rights violations against Falun Gong practitioners, including arrests, detention, torture, and reeducation through labor camps;

Whereas the Department of State's 2010 Human Rights Report on China cited reports of Falun Gong adherents being committed to mental health facilities, medicated against their will, and forcibly subjected to electric shock treatment;

Whereas the Department of State's 2010 Human Rights Report on China stated that the Government of the People's Republic of China automatically censored e-mail and web chats based on an ever-changing list of sensitive key words, such as "Falun Gong", and periodically blocked the blogs of a number of prominent activists, artists, scholars, and university professors; and

Whereas the 2010 Annual Report of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China found that lawyers involved in human rights advocacy work—including in legal cases involving Falun Gong practitioners and others deemed by the Government of the People's Republic of China to threaten "social stability"—have been harassed by the Government of the People's Republic of China based on who their clients are and the causes those clients represent: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) expresses solidarity with Falun Gong practitioners and their families for the lives, freedoms, and rights they lost for adhering to their beliefs and practices;

(2) calls upon the Chinese Communist Party to immediately cease and desist from its campaign to persecute Falun Gong practitioners and promptly release all Falun Gong practitioners who have been confined, detained, or imprisoned in retaliation for pursuing their right to hold and exercise spiritual beliefs;

(3) emphasizes to the Government of the People's Republic of China that freedom of religion includes the right of Falun Gong practitioners to freely practice Falun Gong in China;

(4) calls upon the President, the Secretary of State, and Members of Congress to—

(A) mark the anniversary of the Government of the People's Republic of China's official repression of the Falun Gong spiritual movement;

(B) express solidarity with persecuted Falun Gong practitioners in China; and

(C) meet with Falun Gong practitioners; and

(5) expresses support for volunteers and participants of the Tuidang movement for their peaceful efforts to reclaim Chinese history and culture, and for their pursuit of a fair and open government, a free people, and a society rooted in the practice of virtue.

SENATE RESOLUTION 233—HONORING THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION SPACE SHUTTLE PROGRAM ON REACHING THE HISTORIC MILESTONE OF THE 135TH AND FINAL FLIGHT OF THE SPACE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Mr. NELSON of Florida (for himself, Mr. BROWN of Ohio, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. WARNER, and Mr. VITTER) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 233

Whereas the launch of the space shuttle Atlantis on July 8, 2011, is the 135th and final flight of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Space Transportation System (STS-135) and the 33rd flight of the space shuttle Atlantis;

Whereas the National Aeronautics and Space Administration built 5 space-capable orbiters, the Columbia, the Challenger, the Discovery, the Atlantis, and the Endeavour;

Whereas, with the launch of STS-135, 355 individuals will have flown 852 times during the history of the Space Shuttle Program, beginning with the launch of the first Space Transportation System flight on April 12, 1981;

Whereas a spirit of international partnership has been fostered among the 16 countries represented on the space shuttle missions flown during the history of the Space Shuttle Program, including Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, and the United States;

Whereas the space shuttles together have flown 537,114,016 miles, with STS-135 adding an additional 4,000,000 miles;

Whereas, during the history of the Space Shuttle Program, more than 2,000 on-orbit experiments have been conducted in the fields of Earth science, biology, fluids, materials sciences, and astronomy;

Whereas the Space Shuttle Program has executed the launch and service of the Hubble Space Telescope, enabling groundbreaking and breathtaking views of the universe outside of our solar system;

Whereas the space shuttles have docked to 2 different space stations, with 9 missions to Mir, the space station of the Government of Russia, and 37 missions to the International Space Station;

Whereas the Space Shuttle Program has been essential to the on-orbit assembly of the International Space Station and vital to ensuring the continued viability and support of the International Space Station;

Whereas the space shuttles have landed at the Kennedy Space Center 77 times, at Edwards Air Force Base 54 times, and at the White Sands Test Facility once;

Whereas the launch configuration of the entire Space Transportation System contains approximately 2,500,000 moving parts and, at lift-off, weighs approximately 4,500,000 pounds; and

Whereas the space shuttles can travel around the Earth at a speed of approximately 17,500 miles per hour: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) congratulates the National Aeronautics and Space Administration on reaching the historic milestone of the 135th and final flight of the Space Transportation System;

(2) honors the men and women of the Space Shuttle Program, who worked tirelessly to

design, build, and operate the Space Transportation System, in order to promote science, exploration, and international cooperation;

(3) remembers the 14 crewmembers lost during the space shuttle Challenger accident, which occurred on January 28, 1986, and the space shuttle Columbia accident, which occurred on February 1, 2003;

(4) notes the diligence in applying the lessons learned through the Challenger and Columbia tragedies to honor the 14 crewmembers we lost and enhance the safety of the crewmembers that followed;

(5) recognizes that the Space Shuttle Program has inspired generations of children to become engineers, scientists, and explorers, which has led to maintaining the precedent of leadership in human space exploration set by the United States during the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo missions; and

(6) acknowledges that the Space Shuttle Program has, through its technological advancements and scientific research, driven innovation in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to benefit the people of the United States and all of humankind.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 550. Mr. ROCKEFELLER (for himself and Mr. CASEY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 535 submitted by Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. BROWN of Ohio, and Mr. MERKLEY) and intended to be proposed to the bill S. 1323, to express the sense of the Senate on shared sacrifice in resolving the budget deficit; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 551. Mr. WYDEN (for himself and Mr. MERKLEY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 2055, making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2012, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 552. Mr. WYDEN (for himself and Mr. MERKLEY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 2055, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 550. Mr. ROCKEFELLER (for himself and Mr. CASEY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 535 submitted by Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. BROWN of Ohio, and Mr. MERKLEY) and intended to be proposed to the bill S. 1323, to express the sense of the Senate on shared sacrifice in resolving the budget deficit; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end, add the following:

SEC. . SENSE OF THE SENATE ON PROTECTING MEDICAID.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) 68,000,000 low-income children, parents, pregnant women, seniors and people with disabilities are served by the Medicaid program.

(2) After almost 50 years, Medicaid is still a life-saving part of what we do as a government—by providing health care to more than 20 percent of all Americans, including 40 per-

cent of the births, 50 percent of long-term care, and, along with the Children's Health Insurance Program, 34 percent of the children in our country.

(3) Medicaid provides essential health coverage, furnishing a usual source of care, lowering infant mortality rates, improving the health of adults and children with chronic illnesses and special health care needs, and providing critical preventive care.

(4) Medicaid provides essential coverage for seniors and people with disabilities. It covers 62 percent of all long-term care services and supports. It also covers premiums and copayments on behalf of low-income Medicare beneficiaries

(5) The 9,000,000 beneficiaries who are dually eligible for Medicaid and Medicare are among the most medically complex beneficiaries and account for nearly 40 percent of Medicaid spending, although they account for only 15 percent of Medicaid enrollment. Significant Medicaid cuts would undermine efforts to improve care and lower costs for this group of beneficiaries.

(6) Medicaid is a very efficient program. On average, after adjusting for differences in health, Medicaid costs 27 percent less per child than private insurance and 20 percent less for adults. Between 2000 and 2009, per beneficiary spending grew at 4.6 percent compared to 7.7 percent growth in premiums for employer sponsored insurance.

(7) Medicaid is an economic engine supporting millions of home-grown jobs at hospitals, nursing homes, community health centers, and doctor's offices.

(8) Medicaid is the health care program that helps States during times of crises—including after the September 11th attacks, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and the recent floods and tornados in the South and Midwest. It automatically expands during an economic downturn to assist families who lose their jobs and health insurance.

(9) Medicaid is the largest source of Federal revenues for States. According to the National Governors Association, "federal spending reductions for Medicaid will result in a direct cost shift to States, which will result in reduced Medicaid expenditures, increased State taxes or reductions in K-12 education, transportation, and public safety funding."

(10) Cuts to federal Medicaid funding will force already cash-strapped States to cut eligibility, benefits, and provider payment rates, inevitably resulting in reduced access to care for children, parents, pregnant women, seniors and people with disabilities who have nowhere else to turn for affordable, comprehensive coverage.

(b) SENSE OF THE SENATE.—It is the sense of the Senate that any agreement to reduce the budget deficit should not include arbitrary cuts to Medicaid that shift health care costs to States and local governments and jeopardize health care coverage for millions of Americans.

SA 551. Mr. WYDEN (for himself and Mr. MERKLEY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 2055, making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2012, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 84, between lines 5 and 6, insert the following:

SEC. 127. (a) Using funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this title under the heading "DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BASE CLOSURE ACCOUNT 2005", and notwith-

standing the deadline specified in section 2904(a)(5) of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990 (part A of title XXIX of Public Law 101-510; 10 U.S.C. 2687 note), the Umatilla Chemical Depot, Oregon, shall be closed as part of the 2005 round of defense base closure and realignment after the completion of chemical demilitarization activities required under the Chemical Weapons Convention, as provided under Recommendation #160 of the final report of the 2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission.

(b) None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this or any other Act may be obligated or expended to close Umatilla Army Chemical Depot outside of the process provided for under the 2005 round of defense base closure and realignment.

SA 552. Mr. WYDEN (for himself and Mr. MERKLEY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 2055, making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2012, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 84, between lines 5 and 6, insert the following:

SEC. 127. None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this or any other Act may be obligated or expended to close Umatilla Army Chemical Depot outside of the process provided for under the 2005 round of defense base closure and realignment pursuant to Recommendation #160 of the final report of the 2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission.

NOTICE OF HEARING

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I would like to announce for the information of the Senate and the public that a hearing has been scheduled before the Subcommittee on National Parks. The hearing will be held on Thursday, July 28, 2011, at 2:30 p.m., in room SD-366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

The purpose of the hearing is to receive testimony on the following bills:

S. 264, A bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey to the State of Mississippi 2 parcels of surplus land within the boundary of the Natchez Trace Parkway, and for other purposes;

S. 265, A bill to authorize the acquisition of core battlefield land at Champion Hill, Port Gibson, and Raymond for addition to Vicksburg National Military Park;

S. 324, A bill to amend the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Development Act to extend to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park Commission;

S. 764, A bill to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to make technical corrections to the segment designations for the Chetco River, Oregon;

S. 864, A bill to designate a Distinguished Flying Cross National Memorial at the March Field Air Museum in Riverside, California;

S. 883, A bill to authorize National Mall Liberty Fund D.C. to establish a

memorial on Federal land in the District of Columbia to honor free persons and slaves who fought for independence, liberty, and justice for all during the American Revolution;

S. 888, A bill to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate a segment of Illabot Creek in Skagit County, Washington, as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System;

S. 925, A bill to designate Mt. Andrea Lawrence;

S. 970, A bill to designate additional segments and tributaries of White Clay Creek, in the States of Delaware and Pennsylvania, as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System;

S. 1063, A bill to allow for the harvest of gull eggs by the Huna Tlingit people within Glacier Bay National Park in the State of Alaska;

S. 1134, A bill to authorize the St. Croix River Crossing Project with appropriate mitigation measures to promote river values; and

S. 1235, A bill to recognize the memorial at the Navy UDT-SEAL Museum in Fort Pierce, Florida, as the official national memorial of Navy SEALs and their predecessors.

Because of the limited time available for the hearing, witnesses may testify by invitation only. However, those wishing to submit written testimony for the hearing record should send it to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate, Washington, DC 20510-6150, or by email to jake_mccook@energy.senate.gov.

For further information, please contact David Brooks or Jake McCook.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on July 13, 2011, at 10 a.m. in room 253 of the Russell Senate Office Building. The Committee will hold a hearing entitled, "Unauthorized Charges on Telephone Bills: Why Crammers Win and Consumers Lose."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Environment and Public Works be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on July 13, 2011, at 10 a.m. in room SD-406 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be authorized to

meet during the session of the Senate on July 13, 2011, at 9 a.m., in HVC-210 of the Capitol Visitor Center, to conduct a hearing entitled "Tax Reform and the Tax Treatment of Debt and Equity."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on July 13, 2011, at 3 p.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate, on July 13, 2011, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing entitled "Ten Years After 9/11: Preventing Terrorist Travel."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate, on July 13, 2011, at 10 a.m., in room SD-226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled "The Violence Against Women Act: Building on Seventeen Years of Accomplishments."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate, on July 13, 2011, at 2:30 p.m., in room SD-226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled "Nominations."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWERS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Seapower of the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on, July 13, 2011, at 2:30 p.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Carlos Algara, an intern in the office of Senator MERKLEY, be granted privilege of the floor for the duration of the remainder of today's session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION SPACE SHUTTLE PROGRAM

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 233, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 233) honoring the men and women of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Space Shuttle Program on reaching the historic milestone of the 135th and final flight of the Space Transportation System.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, because I was on the floor, the remarkable Senate staff, who do this so much in a routine fashion, asked me to do this. Of course, it was with enormous emotion that I watched *Atlantis* soar into the heavens last Friday. This is a fitting tribute to the people who have made this program possible for 30 years, with 135 flights, not without tragedy for we lost two space shuttles and 14 souls. Now we are going to a vigorous new program with new, more efficient, and safer rockets that will take us into the heavens.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and any statements relating to the resolution be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 233) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 233

Whereas the launch of the space shuttle Atlantis on July 8, 2011, is the 135th and final flight of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Space Transportation System (STS-135) and the 33rd flight of the space shuttle Atlantis;

Whereas the National Aeronautics and Space Administration built 5 space-capable orbiters, the Columbia, the Challenger, the Discovery, the Atlantis, and the Endeavour;

Whereas, with the launch of STS-135, 355 individuals will have flown 852 times during the history of the Space Shuttle Program, beginning with the launch of the first Space Transportation System flight on April 12, 1981;

Whereas a spirit of international partnership has been fostered among the 16 countries represented on the space shuttle missions flown during the history of the Space Shuttle Program, including Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, and the United States;

Whereas the space shuttles together have flown 537,114,016 miles, with STS-135 adding an additional 4,000,000 miles;

Whereas, during the history of the Space Shuttle Program, more than 2,000 on-orbit

experiments have been conducted in the fields of Earth science, biology, fluids, materials sciences, and astronomy;

Whereas the Space Shuttle Program has executed the launch and service of the Hubble Space Telescope, enabling groundbreaking and breathtaking views of the universe outside of our solar system;

Whereas the space shuttles have docked to 2 different space stations, with 9 missions to Mir, the space station of the Government of Russia, and 37 missions to the International Space Station;

Whereas the Space Shuttle Program has been essential to the on-orbit assembly of the International Space Station and vital to ensuring the continued viability and support of the International Space Station;

Whereas the space shuttles have landed at the Kennedy Space Center 77 times, at Edwards Air Force Base 54 times, and at the White Sands Test Facility once;

Whereas the launch configuration of the entire Space Transportation System contains approximately 2,500,000 moving parts and, at lift-off, weighs approximately 4,500,000 pounds; and

Whereas the space shuttles can travel around the Earth at a speed of approximately 17,500 miles per hour: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) congratulates the National Aeronautics and Space Administration on reaching the historic milestone of the 135th and final flight of the Space Transportation System;

(2) honors the men and women of the Space Shuttle Program, who worked tirelessly to design, build, and operate the Space Transportation System, in order to promote science, exploration, and international cooperation;

(3) remembers the 14 crewmembers lost during the space shuttle Challenger accident, which occurred on January 28, 1986, and the space shuttle Columbia accident, which occurred on February 1, 2003;

(4) notes the diligence in applying the lessons learned through the Challenger and Columbia tragedies to honor the 14 crewmembers we lost and enhance the safety of the crewmembers that followed;

(5) recognizes that the Space Shuttle Program has inspired generations of children to become engineers, scientists, and explorers, which has led to maintaining the precedent of leadership in human space exploration set by the United States during the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo missions; and

(6) acknowledges that the Space Shuttle Program has, through its technological advancements and scientific research, driven innovation in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to benefit the people of the United States and all of humankind.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

CONGRESSIONAL RETIREMENT AGE ACT

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I appreciate the comments of the senior Senator from Florida about Social Security. In my State—and it is not much different in Rhode Island, the State of the Presiding Officer—the average Social Security benefit is \$14,000 a year. A huge percent—I think about half—of Social Security beneficiaries in Ohio rely on Social Security for more than half of their income.

When I hear proposals here, which Senator NELSON also was speaking against, to make significant cuts to seniors who are getting \$1,000 a month from Social Security and letting off hedge fund managers who are paying significantly lower tax rates than most people in the middle class—that the sacrifice is aimed toward the middle class and aimed toward seniors and not spread more evenly among people who are the most privileged of society—it bothers me, as it does, I know, the Presiding Officer.

I rise today about a similar issue, about a Social Security issue also, calling on my colleagues in the Senate and in the House of Representatives to practice what we preach.

Presently, the Congress and the White House are working to find agreement on ways to balance the budget, as we should. I was part of the effort in the 1990s. During the Clinton years we balanced the Federal budget. In fact, during those 8 years, we took a terrible deficit and high unemployment, and even though taxes for upper income people were raised to 39 percent, we saw 21 million private sector jobs created, we saw incomes going up, and we saw that President Clinton left office with the highest budget surplus in American history.

We saw the policies of the next 8 years and what they did to our country: tax cuts for the wealthy, deregulation of Wall Street, bad trade agreements, a giveaway to the drug and insurance companies, and two unpaid-for wars and where that got us to this budget situation—exacerbated by this recession in the last 3 years. So we clearly need to move forward in balancing the budget.

Some Washington politicians want to balance the budget by cutting the Social safety net upon which millions of hard-working Americans rely. I oppose those efforts.

In a time of fiscal belt-tightening, Members of Congress should also share the burden of reducing that deficit. That is why I have introduced the Congressional Retirement Age Act of 2011.

The bill is simple. As Congress and the White House seek an agreement on a deficit reduction package, Members of Congress cannot permit themselves to receive benefits denied to ordinary working Americans.

While the wealth of Members of Congress varies, there is no doubt we receive a healthy salary and benefits compared to millions of American families who do not.

Members of Congress also have an added benefit. We can access our Federal retirement benefits early, whether we serve as few as 5 or as many as 25 years. Millions of seniors—who have worked their lives in factories or have worked their lives in construction or have worked their lives walking the floor of retail outlets, department stores or diners—millions of seniors cannot do the same. For too many Americans, Social Security has become

their retirement plan, as pensions disappear and 401(k)s plummet.

All Members of Congress are able to collect their pensions at any time—starting at age 50—if they have served 25 years. Most have not by the age of 50, obviously, but once they have served 25 years, they can receive full pensions. If they have served as few as 5 years, they can collect their pensions beginning at age 62.

So with 25 years of congressional service, Members of Congress can receive pensions immediately upon retirement. If they have served 5 years, they can receive a pension—not a large one at that point but a pretty decent pension—at age 62.

But what about a Youngstown steelworker, what about a Columbus store clerk, what about a Cincinnati nurse, what about a Toledo sheet metal worker, what about an Akron worker in a rubber plant? Do they get that option? Of course not. They have to wait until age 65, or age 62 at a discounted amount, to receive retirement benefits.

No longer should any Congressman, no longer should any Congresswoman, no longer should any Senator be treated differently from other Americans. That is what the Congressional Retirement Age Act of 2011 would ensure.

This bill would amend the Federal Employees Retirement System and the Civil Service Retirement System to directly tie current and future Members of Congress' access to their Federal retirement benefits to the Social Security retirement age.

It is that simple and it is bipartisan. Senator McCASKILL of Missouri, a Democrat, Senator JOHNSON of South Dakota, a Democrat, are cosponsors. The House companion, introduced by Representative BOBBY SCHILLING of Illinois, a Republican, has seven Republican cosponsors.

This idea is endorsed by the conservative National Taxpayers Union, that calls it “one of the few serious attempts to reform Congressional pensions in recent memory.” I do not agree with the National Taxpayers Union on that many issues; they are too willing to cut benefits for the middle class, in my view. But together, on this issue, we share the belief that Members of Congress should be treated as any other citizen. There is no reason that the benefits of being a Member of Congress should be more generous than being a member of the middle class.

According to reports, 13 sitting Senators and 31 Members of the House of Representatives today have accrued annual pensions worth at last \$50,000, if they were to retire today. Meanwhile, American workers age 65 or older receive a median private pension payment of about \$8,000 a year.

Elected officials do not, frankly—I think you look around this body and you know that most House Members and Senators, at least a number of them, simply do not know enough people who work in construction, who work in a retail store, who work at a

diner, who work at a manufacturing plant, who work in a hotel cleaning rooms, who stand up all day as a cosmetologist or as a barber, working in jobs where their bodies simply cannot work until the age of 70.

Members of Congress, dressing like this and doing what we do, can often work—obviously, if the voters say so—can, obviously, work into our 70s. It is not that hard for most of us. But while we go to work in a suit and tie, tens of millions of American workers work in factories and mines and fields and diners and hotels and their bodies simply cannot work until the age of 70.

So when I hear my colleagues say we should raise the Social Security retirement age, I think of people working in the service industry, I think of people doing demanding work in agriculture and on shop floors and in construction and hairdressers, and all that.

Why should they wait longer for their retirement security—albeit it is too small to begin with in many cases; it is minimal, often, at best—but why should they wait longer for their retirement security than Members of Congress?

So for those who think about raising the retirement age for Social Security, think about raising the retirement age for ourselves. There is simply no reason we, as Members of Congress—no matter how many years of service—

should be able to retire at full pension before Social Security beneficiaries in this country.

Why should Members of Congress be treated better than a steelworker or a store clerk or a nurse or a hotel worker?

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, JULY 14, 2011

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, July 14; that following the prayer and the pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the morning hour be deemed expired, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; that following any leader remarks, the Senate proceed to a period of morning business for 1 hour with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with

the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the second half; that following morning business, the Senate resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 2055, the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies appropriations bill post-cloture; further that all time during adjournment, morning business and recess count postcloture on the motion to proceed to H.R. 2055.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PROGRAM

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. We hope to get an agreement to begin consideration of the Military Construction appropriations bill early tomorrow.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M. TOMORROW

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it adjourn under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 5:45 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, July 14, 2011, at 9:30 a.m.