

The largest annual deficit ever accumulated by the previous administration was \$455 billion. So what did President Obama do when he took office? He wrote a budget that guarantees average annual deficits of more than double that every year for the next 10 years. More than doubles the largest deficit we had during the Bush years and anticipates that for every year for the next decade.

So the kind of spending and debt Democrats are engaged in and which they are committed to continue year after year is like nothing this country has ever seen. We have never seen anything like this. It threatens not only the livelihoods of our children, it threatens our national security and the very safety net Democrats claim they want to protect.

The fact is, the longer we wait to address this debt in a serious manner, the more that safety net actually frays and the harder this crisis will be to address. At some point a choice has to be made, and that point is now.

I noticed that the President's Chief of Staff had some ideas over the weekend about how to frame up the November elections. I cannot think of a better example of how detached the Democrats seem to be at this moment from the concerns of the American people. Americans want to know what is being done to fix a broken pipe at the bottom of the Gulf, not what is being done to fix the election. The White House might view the upcoming election as its biggest crisis at the moment, but the American people are focused on fixing this pipe and cleaning up this mess. Two months of delays and bureaucratic redtape have done nothing to solve the crisis, but they have done a lot to discredit the kind of big-government solutions that Democrats continue to promote. Every day the oil continues to flow is a day Americans' faith in government ends.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, my friend says he has never seen anything like this. Well, I have never seen anything like this reasoning. Everyone knows that President Obama did not cause the oil gushing into the ocean, and he has done his utmost to try to alleviate the pain and suffering of the people in the gulf. He had the good fortune of getting the company responsible for this oil gushing out of the ocean to come up with a \$20 billion trust fund to pay the people who suffered. There were some Republicans last week who said they thought it was wrong for the President to do that. But that was a very small minority who believed that. I have never seen anything like this. So President Obama is not responsible for the oil gushing out of the Earth into the ocean, and President Obama is not responsible for the severe recession that hit this country in the last few months of the Bush administration.

I cannot imagine anyone thinking we should not have taken the measures we

did to help bolster the economy. The economic recovery package created millions of jobs. There is still money in the pipeline to create more jobs. And as it says in this one op-ed piece in the New York Times today:

And some of the most vocal deficit scolds in Congress are working hard to reduce taxes for the handful of lucky Americans who are heirs to multimillion-dollar estates. This would do nothing for the economy now, but it will reduce revenue by billions of dollars a year, permanently.

It will be interesting to see in the next few weeks how these same budget hawks feel about the estate taxes that we have to address. I would hope we can all be calm and deliberate here. We have a few weeks left. We have 2 weeks in this week period, 4 or 5 the next work period to get some things done here.

We have appropriations bills we have to do. We have these tax extenders we have been working on, as I indicated, for 8 weeks. We have the unemployment benefits we need to extend. People are now desperate for that money. We have also something to help States called FMAP, which helps for Medicaid, which has been such a drain on the States because of the tremendous problems we have had with people being out of work and needing to go on Medicaid because there is no place else for them to go for health care.

I would hope we can move forward on the legislation that we tried try to finish last week. I am grateful we were able to finally get the short-term fix on the patients who are Medicare recipients. Now if we can get something done in the House there, doctors will be able to be reimbursed not at the fat and sassy rate, but at least it will be better than the 21-percent cut that was going to go into effect today or tomorrow.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be a period of morning business until 5:15 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with no motions in order.

The Senator from Arizona is recognized.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I want to speak briefly today about some broken promises related to the health care bill, specifically, President Obama's promise that if Americans liked their current coverage, they would be able to keep it.

Remember that promise. Last June, the President promised on national television that:

Government is not going to make you change plans under health reform.

In his September address to Congress, he reassured Americans:

If you have health insurance through your job, nothing in our plan requires you to change what you have.

Well, those two statements are true as far as they go. The law does not require. The problem is, everything written into the law will, nevertheless, result in that happening.

What we are seeing is new developments every week that prove that what we had said would happen will, in fact, happen. Many Americans are not going to be able to keep the coverage they have, even though they like it. That includes many who have employer-based coverage in addition to many seniors who rely on private Medicare plans known as Medicare Advantage.

So how does this happen? First, with regard to the 170 million Americans who have employer-based coverage, regulations are being written right now by the administration, specifically by the Labor and Health and Human Services Departments and the IRS that will have a direct impact on people not being able to keep their plans. These regulations deal with existing plans called "grandfathered plans." Grandfathered status was supposed to allow employers to continue offering their current plans even if they did not meet all of the government's new cost-increasing mandates and requirements, such as minimum standards for what a plan must offer. That was the whole point of grandfathering.

It was also intended to protect Americans enrolled in their plans from "rate shock" or significant premium increases as a result of the new government mandates. But according to the administration's own report, new regulations could mean that two-thirds of all workers at small businesses would have to relinquish their grandfathered status, exposing them to these new mandates and requirements.

The worst-case scenario, according to the report, is that a whopping 80 percent of small firms' plans would lose their grandfathered status. By 2013, the report concludes, more than half of all workers' plans, 51 percent, will be subject to new Federal requirements. So much for the idea that if you like your plan you get to keep it.

These requirements drive up the cost of insurance, impede an employer's ability to adjust to rising health care costs, and ultimately provide an incentive to employers to drop their coverage altogether and instead pay a fine or, to put it another way, it creates a disincentive to keeping your coverage and an incentive to dropping their coverage and forcing them to buy the coverage through the so-called exchange.

The individual mandate provision in the bill would then require these workers whose coverage has been dropped to purchase the government-approved insurance from the new government-dictated exchange, replete with the highest costs, more mandates, and so on.

Of the new regulations, James Gelfand, who is health policy director

at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, said:

These rules are extremely strict. Almost no plan is going to be able to maintain grandfathered status.

So what has happened? The President said: If you like your plan, you get to keep it. We will grandfather it in.

Now the rules and regulations are being written in such a way that virtually none of the plans will be grandfathered so that the employers all have an incentive to send their employees to the new health exchange and therefore to drop the coverage they currently have and like.

This frankly validates concerns that we voiced throughout the debate, that despite the President's claims, his health care bill will force Americans to accept unwanted health care coverage changes and that, in fact, therefore it amounts to a government takeover of health care.

I mentioned American seniors. This is the second area in which they will not get to keep their plans even though they like them. The White House recently sent out a promotional mailer to seniors, saying:

Your guaranteed Medicare benefits won't change—whether you get them through original Medicare or a Medicare Advantage plan. Instead, you will see new benefits and cost savings.

Wrong. Seniors are normally skeptical about such a claim, given the President's bill is funded by \$½ trillion in Medicare cuts. Republicans brought this up repeatedly during the health care debate. Democrats assured seniors not to worry, that if they liked their plan they could keep it. They were promised the law would strengthen Medicare. Yet now we are seeing and hearing from the experts that millions of seniors too will lose their Medicare Advantage benefits.

In fact, the White House's claims to the contrary are flatly contradicted by the administration's own expert, Richard Foster. He is the CMS Actuary, and he says:

The new provisions [in the health care law] will generally reduce [Medicare Advantage] rebates to plans and thereby result in less generous benefits packages.

That is the administration's own actuary telling us that seniors who have Medicare Advantage will not get to keep what they have. Here is how a Wall Street Journal op-ed summed up the expert's conclusions:

In an April memo, Richard Foster estimated that the \$206 billion hole in Advantage will reduce benefits, cause insurers to withdraw from the program, and reduce overall enrollment by half. Doug Elmendorf and his team at the Congressional Budget Office came to the same conclusion, as did every other honest expert.

In conclusion, we have a number of experts, not partisans, on the record saying that seniors who use Medicare Advantage will see their benefits eliminated and their coverage changed.

The administration is trying to soften the blow by sending some seniors a

\$250 rebate check. I am sure people are happy to get the check. But it is not much of a gain for those seniors who face skyrocketing premiums and may not have access to the same Medicare Advantage plans they now enjoy.

These developments are consistent with a pattern. It is a pattern ever since the bill was passed and signed into law by the President of broken promises. Americans never liked or wanted this bill, and they are continually reminded why they opposed it in the first place. The fact is, it turns out they will not get to keep what they have even if they like it. That is just one of the reasons why a strong majority of Americans want to see it repealed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. DORGAN. I ask unanimous consent to speak for 30 minutes in morning business.

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

DEFICITS AND DEBT

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I listened to the leaders today. I was thinking about Will Rogers, who once said: You could call me a hick or call me a rube, but the fact is, I would sooner be the person who buys the Brooklyn Bridge than the person who sells it. I was thinking of the fiction in that clever Will Rogers quote and some of the fiction I hear on the floor of the Senate.

Everybody here understands—if not, they better understand quickly—the dilemma of the unbelievable growth of deficits or debt for this country. It is unsustainable. There is no question about that. But it is interesting to me that just recently we have had the minority side of the aisle decide this is their life's calling despite the fact that this President, the day he was inaugurated and walked across the door into the White House, had this President done nothing but sleep for the next year, he inherited a Federal deficit of \$1.3 trillion. This stuff about he said, we said, she said, they said, the American people aren't very interested in all that. What they are interested in is what caused this problem and who is going to step up and fix it.

Let's talk about what caused this problem. What ran this country into the ditch and what has caused this unbelievable runup in debt? No. 1, early on in 2001, I and others stood on the floor when President Bush—yes, President Bush; and I am not here just to tarnish his Presidency, I am here to talk about his record—said: We now have 10 years of expected budget surpluses. Let's do something with that money. President Bush had inherited a record budget surplus from the Clinton Administration. The new President took over and said: We have to have very big tax cuts to get rid of these surpluses.

I stood on this floor and said: These surpluses don't exist yet. Let's be a little conservative.

He said: "Katy, bar the door," we are going to give this money away.

Very big tax cuts, the largest benefits went to the highest income earners in the country. Then what did we experience? Very quickly, a recession, an attack against our country on 9/11, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Then we sent soldiers off to war and didn't pay for one penny of it. Everybody in this Chamber knows better than that. You don't fight a war by asking people to go risk their lives but we won't risk anything by asking the American people to pay for the cost of the war. We will just put it on the debt.

As all this was going on, we had a bunch of new regulators who came to town from the new administration who said: It is a new day. We are going to have business-friendly regulation in this town. We won't look. We won't watch. We don't care what you do.

As a result, we had an unbelievable outpouring of greed that ran this country into the ditch by some of the biggest financial enterprises in the country.

I am not sure either side is much of a bargain for the American people these days. I understand that. But I don't think we ought to rewrite history. This President inherited the biggest mess since Franklin Delano Roosevelt came to the Presidency. That is a fact. Now we have to try to work together to figure out what we do about it. How do we deal with this? How do we respond to the burgeoning Federal budget deficits?

By the way, some say: Let's make our stand by shutting down unemployment insurance for folks at the bottom, the folks who don't have a job, those people who have been told: Your job doesn't exist anymore; you are done; you are out of here. And we have about 20 million fewer jobs than we need in this country. In the last 9 years, we lost more than 5 million jobs of people who work in the factories.

Will Rogers also once said: I see where Congress passed a bill to help bankers' mistakes. You can always count on us helping those who have lost part of their fortune, but the whole history records nary a case where the loan was for the person who had absolutely nothing.

And so it is in this Congress—hundreds of billions here and there in tax cuts and bailouts. But now it is about helping people with unemployment. That is where we make our stand, according to some. It is pretty unbelievable. We need to start working together to find common solutions. Describing where the other side is wrong is hardly a productive enterprise. It is pretty easy to do, in fact.

That is not why I came to talk, but it does get tiresome trying to rewrite history here on the floor of the Senate. I am not suggesting one Presidency is good or bad. I am saying this President