

now Congress's duty to step up and take the lead.

We have an obligation to be straightforward and honest with the American people about the financial challenges America faces. There was a furor over our continuing plunge into debt and deficit starting in 2009 and 2010 as we saw the spending explode with stimulus plans that didn't work and other policies that continued to drive us into debt. Unfortunately, that level of intensity and displeasure over all that was happening has subsided, but the problem hasn't gone away. It needs to be addressed, and it needs to be addressed now.

As I said, we have an obligation as Members of this body and of the Congress to be honest and straightforward with the American people about where we stand and what we will do about it.

I received a letter from one of my constituents, Steven of Martinsville, Indiana. Steven wrote to me to describe his concerns about our national debt and spending. Let me quote from his letter:

As of today, the outstanding national debt is over \$18 trillion. That is an overly exorbitant amount of money.

It certainly is, Steven. You are right. It is an exorbitant amount of money—one we can hardly even get our minds around in terms of what \$18 trillion means.

Steven continued:

Therefore, I would like to know our options in America.

I think we as elected officials have an obligation to list those options and describe what we would do about it if we had the opportunity and the support from the President, which is not forthcoming, but perhaps it will be. Surely even the executive branch and the President have to understand the situation we are in and the consequences of not doing something about it.

I am sure my colleagues received many letters and information from constituents who are concerned about the health of our Nation, from our mounting Federal debt, to our management—or I suppose I could say mismanagement of the Federal budget. Our constituents want to know what we, as their elected officials, are going to do about it.

What is plain as day to Steven, unfortunately, is not so clear here in Washington because the President says we don't have a spending problem, we have a revenue problem. I can't go home to people in Indiana and tell them that we need to tax more because government is growing and needs their money, and do so without derision coming back my way because people are being taxed to death. This President has an obsession with solving every conceivable problem by asking for more revenue and more taxes. The revenue is increasing; yet we have not placed the necessary spending restraints to control this ever-growing dilemma of deficit spending.

I think there is only one real solution to our problem—a solution that is

absolutely necessary because we literally have tried everything else and come up short—and that solution is for this body to pass a balanced budget constitutional amendment. That is why I am cosponsoring an amendment to the United States Constitution that forces the Federal Government to balance its budget, limits the growth of government spending, and that requires a supermajority to pass any tax increase. Without these measures, we will not successfully deal with this problem.

This is not a new idea. I served here in 1995 and again in 1997. I voted for a balanced budget amendment to limit spending and require the Federal Government to balance its checkbook. Both times, the Senate came one vote short of the necessary two-thirds to pass the constitutional amendment and send it to the States for ratification. One vote—one Member out of 100—could have voted with us, and we would have put ourselves on the path towards a balanced budget. We would not have begun to have the problems of ever-increasing debt, ever-increasing new taxes to cover that debt, and constriction in terms of spending for national priorities, such as defense and health research. Unfortunately, it didn't. When the amendment failed in 1997, our nation's debt stood at \$5.36 trillion. Our debt is about three and a half times larger today. If we had had the political will to act then, we would not be faced with the financial challenges that exist today.

By passing a balanced budget amendment, we can send to the States not just a message that we are serious about addressing our fiscal woes, but that we are giving them a voice, we are giving people a voice, and we are giving them the power to hold Federal spending accountable. It would be a unique opportunity to right a wrong and begin restoring our fiscal house by making the Federal Government accountable for its spending.

In March of 1997 I stood on this very floor and warned about the dangers of operating outside our means. I said it then, and I would like to say it again today. I am quoting from what I said in 1997:

There is no reliable check on this process of intergenerational theft. It is politically prudent, even popular, and this political calculation will not change, will never permanently change without some kind of systematic institutional counterweight, without some measure to give posterity a voice in our affairs. Nothing, in my view, will permanently change until the accumulation of popular debt is a violation of our oath to the Constitution. Perverse incentives of the current system will not be altered until the system itself is altered, until our political interests are balanced by the weighty words of a constitutional amendment. It would be a much needed balance.

We need to come to this body at the beginning of each session and put our left hand on the Bible and our right hand forward and swear to uphold the Constitution, which would involve re-

sponsible spending to keep us from plunging into disastrous consequences.

I mentioned earlier that Steven from Martinsville, IN, sent me this letter. What I did not mention is that Steven is a Boy Scout working toward his Citizenship in the Nation merit badge, which teaches Scouts how to become active citizens who are aware of and grateful for their liberties and their rights.

We all know that Boy Scouts take this oath—the oath to be trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, brave, clean, reverent, and thrifty. If we just take one of those principles, thrifty, and apply it to our governing, then America would be in a better place.

We cannot fail Steven, and we cannot fail his generation. His share of the debt will amount to more than \$62,000 in 10 years. Let's not keep shifting the hard choices to our children and grandchildren. Let's not deny them the opportunity at the American dream that all of us in my generation have enjoyed. The opportunity that comes with responsible spending and a responsible government. Opportunity that comes to few people in the world. We are so privileged as Americans to have that, and we are denying that to the future. By passing this balanced budget amendment, we can honor the moral tradition of sacrificing for posterity instead of asking posterity to sacrifice for us.

With that, I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF ASHTON B. CARTER TO BE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Ashton B. Carter, of Massachusetts, to be Secretary of Defense.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 2 p.m. will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

The Senator from Maine.

(The remarks of Ms. COLLINS and Ms. KLOBUCHAR pertaining to the submission of S. Res. 74 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Submitted Resolutions.")

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RUBIO). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be rescinded.

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

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY FUNDING

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I always try to be accurate in what I say on the floor. Having been trained before Federal judges for almost 15 years, practicing law, if you said something out of line, you got hammered for it.

My friend, very good friend and colleague, the Democratic whip, Senator DURBIN, earlier today came to the floor and said: Mr. President, I have been trying to understand what is holding up the funding for the Department of Homeland Security.

I would ask my colleague Senator DURBIN: Have you ever heard of a filibuster? What about the filibuster you are leading to block the bill that funds Homeland Security? I mean how much more obvious can the answer be to what is holding up funding for the Department of Homeland Security, the House-passed legislation?

It is good legislation, to my knowledge. There is very little dispute about the agencies and the departments in Homeland Security in terms of what they would get in terms of funding. They simply said that the extra-lawful actions of President Obama would not be funded.

The Los Angeles Times now says that this executive amnesty could cost up to \$484 million. I think it will be much more. The Los Angeles Times isn't counting the cost to State and local governments, welfare costs, tax costs. This is just their idea of what it will cost to give lawful status to 5 million people. It is going to cost more than that. But \$484 million is still a lot of money.

Congress, the House of Representatives, said: Mr. President, we don't agree with this policy and your policy is unlawful. You said 20 times yourself you don't have the power to do this. Constitutional scholars say that. It is an erosion of our power and, based on the fact that we don't like the policy and we think it is unlawful policy, we are going to fund Homeland Security, we are just not going to allow you to take money from enforcement of homeland security laws to reward people who violated the laws.

Isn't that a responsible thing for Congress to do? Isn't it an absolute fact that Congress has the power to fund what it desires to fund and not fund what it does not desire to fund? That is the power of the purse, vested in the coequal branch of Congress. It is Congress's fundamental power.

Senator DURBIN is now leading the filibuster. We have had a series of votes. He has been able to get every single Democrat to vote with him to block even going to the bill, even allowing a bill to come up on the floor of the Senate for debate and amendment.

If he wants to offer language that says we want to ratify what the Presi-

dent did and allow all this to happen, he is free to offer that amendment on the floor of the Senate. But he is not even attempting to do that. He is basically saying we are not going to allow the bill to come up for a vote, and we are going to blame the Republicans for blocking the bill.

What kind of world are we living in? I have suggested that is "through the looking glass." We have the people leading the filibuster accusing the House and Republicans in the Senate for blocking the bill when they, indeed, are the ones doing it.

He also quoted our fine colleague Senator FLAKE to say: To attempt to use the spending bill to try to poke a finger in the President's eye is not a good move, in my mind.

I agree with that, we shouldn't be using a spending bill to poke the President in the eye. But I suggest to my colleagues that the President is the one who has poked the American people in the eye, he has poked the rights and powers of Congress in the eye by taking money that was assigned and given to Homeland Security to enforce the laws of the United States. He is taking out money and spending it at this very moment to undermine and to violate the laws of the United States.

Colleagues, the law of the United States—we have a lot of laws—says that an employer, for example, cannot hire somebody unlawfully in the country.

So the President's proposal: Well, I am going to make 5 million people who are unlawful today lawful. I am going to give them a photo ID, I am going to give them a right to work, a Social Security number, and the right to participate in Social Security and Medicare, because I am angry that Congress wouldn't pass it.

Senator DURBIN says this—and our colleagues who have been leading the filibuster have been saying this—repeatedly.

It is impossible to explain the situation, quoting Senator DURBIN, where the agency "with the premier responsibility to keep America safe is not being adequately funded."

He goes on to say that again about placing America at risk.

I would ask a couple of questions. How does taking funding from the lawful, authorized policies of Homeland Security that are supposed to identify people unlawfully here, to identify terrorists, and do other things to make America safe—how does taking the money from them, to give legal status to 5 million illegal aliens make us safer?

Does that make us safer? How absurd is that?

Ken Palinkas, who is head of the union of CIS workers, the National Citizenship and Immigration Services Council, said:

Unfortunately—and perilously overlooked in Washington—our caseworkers are denied the urgent professional resources, enforcement tools, and mission support we need to

keep out those who are bent on doing us harm.

This is processing the 1 million or so per year who are given lawful status in America. He is not referring to the future when they are going to be expected to process—immediately, apparently—5 million more. They don't have money to process the people today. These are his words, not mine, in a letter dated September of last year. He said:

The 9/11 hijackers got into the U.S. on visas and now, 13 years later, we have around 5 million immigrants in the United States who overstayed their visas—many from high-risk regions in the Middle East. Making matters more dangerous, the Obama Administration's executive amnesty, like S. 744 that he unsuccessfully lobbied for, would legalize visa overstays and cause millions additionally to overstay—raising the threat level to America even higher.

That is what the people who enforce the law every day are saying.

In January of this year, a few weeks ago, January 22, Mr. Palinkas said:

The President's executive amnesty—

And that is what they are objecting to. That is what the people who are filibustering this bill today are doing. They are protecting, advancing, supporting, and attempting to fund the President's unlawful amnesty.

Mr. Palinkas, whose duty it is to enforce these laws, said:

The President's executive amnesty order for 5 million illegal immigrants places the mission of USCIS [that is the immigration service] in grave peril. Instead of meeting our lawful function to protect the Homeland and keep out those who pose a threat to U.S. security, health, or finances, our officers will be assigned to process amnesty for individuals residing illegally inside our nation's borders. This compromises national security and public safety, while undermining officer morale.

That is exactly right. You don't have to be a real expert to understand he is exactly right about this.

He continues:

The Administration's skewed priorities means that the Crystal City amnesty processing center will likely have superior work-site conditions for personnel relative to our normal processing centers. Additionally, the security protocols at place in this facility will be insufficient to engage in any basic screening precautions, ensuring and rewarding massive amounts of fraud. For the administration to continue down this course after the Paris attacks is beyond belief.

This is what we are dealing with. In October of last year, Mr. Palinkas, when the President was proposing this amnesty before it happened, issued a statement on behalf of his workers and his colleagues in the immigration service. He concludes in his statement:

That is why this statement is intended for the public. If you care about your immigration security and your neighborhood security, you must act now to ensure that Congress stops this unilateral amnesty. Let your voice be heard and spread the word to your neighbors. We who serve in our nation's immigration agencies are pleading for your help—don't let it happen. Express your concern to your Senators and Congressmen before it is too late.