

included education cuts of \$1.76 billion, which would eliminate 40 programs and cut an additional 16. I am thankful to my colleagues on the Senate Appropriations Committee for restoring much of this funding. Going forward, we must continue to use fiscal restraint, but we must balance this with the need to invest in critical priorities.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on initiatives to encourage job growth, provide assistance for workers who have lost their jobs, and help alleviate the economic strain that has impacted most Americans. I urge all of my colleagues to add their energies to these efforts.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, my understanding is that the Senator from Nevada is going to propound a unanimous consent request. I will yield to him for that purpose and ask unanimous consent that I be recognized immediately thereafter.

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

The Senator from Nevada is recognized.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— S. 2538

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 385, S. 2538, a bill to provide for an increase in the Federal minimum wage; that the bill be read the third time and passed, and that the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

Mr. GREGG. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I do this following the statement of the Senator from Hawaii, who has certainly laid out a timetable and a reason for doing the minimum wage bill. Senator KENNEDY was on the floor yesterday and did a magnificent job in explaining the need for it. I am sorry that my friends objected.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, are we in morning business at the present time?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Yes.

Mr. DORGAN. I ask unanimous consent to speak for as much time as I may consume.

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I mentioned yesterday that the two most powerful words in the Senate are "I object." They have been used repeatedly in recent months, and especially in recent days, as we have tried toward the end of this Senate session to pass legislation that really does need doing. We

are discovering that we have a number of people in the Senate who just don't want to move forward on some of these issues.

I think the American people wonder, from time to time, whether this Government is very relevant in their lives. I think prior to September 11, 2001, people wondered. Then, when the terrorist attacks occurred, I think people understood that on homeland security and a range of other issues, they do rely on the Government to do certain things to protect them.

We have come to a point now where there is so much unfinished business, so much left undone, as we near the end of this session of the Congress. I think the American people have a right to ask some pretty tough questions about who is doing what and who is objecting to what. Most families sit around the supper table—or the dinner table in some parts of the country—and talk about their lives. What they talk about are not statistics or abstractions; they talk about the things that are important in the lives of their families. They wonder, do we have good jobs? Do our jobs have good security? Are we paid a fair wage? Do grandpa and grandma have access to good health care? Do our kids go to good schools? Do we live in a safe neighborhood?

These are the issues that people care about in our country, and families want something done about them. One of these critical issues is health care. We tried to pass a Patients' Bill of Rights in this Congress and could not get it done. The Patients' Bill of Rights is pretty simple, actually. It is, with the growth of the managed care industry, trying to give a voice to consumers so they have a say in their own health care.

For example, a woman falls off a cliff in the Shenandoah Mountains and is taken into a hospital on a gurney, in a coma. She is very seriously injured, with broken bones and internal injuries. She ultimately recovers after a long convalescence. She is told by her managed care organization that they will not cover her emergency room treatment because she did not have prior approval to access the emergency room. Now, this woman was carried into the hospital on a gurney while in a coma, yet the managed care organization said she should have gotten prior approval for emergency room treatment.

So we tried to pass a piece of legislation that gives patients a voice in their own care, legislation that says patients have a right to know all of their medical options for treatment, not just the cheapest; patients have a right to emergency care when they have an emergency; patients have a right to see the doctor they need for the medical help they require. Pretty straightforward. We could not get it through. We could not get it through a conference committee and to the President for signature. Why? Because too

many people in the Congress said: Let us stand with the insurance companies and the managed care organizations on this subject.

We also face urgent issues dealing with Medicare and Medicaid. Yesterday, we were on the floor of the Senate talking about that. Everybody in this Chamber knows we have to do something to provide fair Medicare reimbursement for physicians, hospitals, nursing homes, and other providers.

We now come to the end of this legislative session, and we know the Medicaid reimbursement for our nursing homes on October 1 was cut. That cut is going to be accentuated with an even deeper cut in 2004, beyond the fiscal year 2003. We know we have to do something to deal with that situation. We know it has to be done, and yet some act as if there is no urgency at all, this will be just fine.

It is not just fine to have a cut in the quality of care of nursing homes in this country. That is exactly what is going to happen. And it is not just fine if the Medicare reimbursement is not adequate to keep rural hospitals open and keep some of the hospitals in inner cities—that are stretched so thin and whose reimbursement was cut so deeply during the Balanced Budget Act—open. It is not just fine to say: Let that go.

We are talking about the quality of health care delivered in hospitals through Medicare, delivered in nursing homes through Medicaid. It is not fine with me when we try to fix this at the end of the session, not having received the cooperation to get it done during the session, and people stand up and say: I object.

What is their plan? What do they propose? Just diminished health care, diminished quality of care in our hospitals and nursing homes? Is that something the American people believe they want? Is that something families say: We aspire to nursing homes that provide diminished care because we would not meet our obligation under Medicaid? We aspire to have hospitals close their doors because we will not own up to our requirements under Medicare? I do not think that is what the American people want or expect of this Congress.

Senators BAUCUS and GRASSLEY have introduced legislation, S. 3018. It is bipartisan. It addresses these issues—Medicaid, Medicare, hospitals, nursing homes, physician reimbursements.

The provider reimbursement we know we have to do, and what happens? The two most powerful words in the Chamber once again: "I object," they say. "I object."

It is the easiest act in the world to do, but we are faced with very significant challenges in health care, Medicaid, and Medicare, and everyone in this Chamber knows we have to fix it.

Here we are on a Thursday at a time when the Congress should have been adjourned, trying to finish some of these last items, and we have people on

the floor of the Senate singing the third verse of the same old tired tune: I object; I object.

I have told my colleagues often about Mark Twain who, when asked if he would engage in a debate, very quickly said yes.

"But we have not told you the subject."

He said: "It doesn't matter, as long as I can take the negative side. The negative side will require no preparation."

He is right. The question is: What are we building here? What are we doing here? What do we aspire for the American people to create here? A better country, a stronger country.

We have spent a great deal of time talking about national security in this Chamber. That is deadly serious business. I would never suggest that ought to be a subject on which we should not spend a great deal of time. It is deadly serious business to talk about our Nation's national security.

It is also important, in my judgment, to spend some time talking about this country's economic security because our capability to defend ourselves, our capability to spend the money to deal with national security challenges and issues relates directly to this country's economy, our ability to create an economic engine that produces growth and opportunity, that provides improvement for the lives of the American people, produces the tax revenues that allow us to have a standing army and have a military capability of dealing with national security issues.

Yet we are in a situation these days where it is as if nobody wants to talk much about economic security. We cannot find the administration's team. We had an economic forum last Friday. We invited the Administration to participate. We said: Won't you come and sit with us and talk about the economy? Let's talk about what kind of challenges exist.

There is no Republican or Democratic way to go broke. There is no Republican or Democratic way to lose a job. It is not partisan when one comes home and says: Honey, I have worked for this company for 18 years, but they told me today my job is over; it wasn't my fault; the company is cutting back because the economy is not good. There is no Republican or Democratic way to filter that through to your family for a man or a woman who has been in the workforce.

There is no Republican or Democratic way for us to fix this either. We have to fix it by trying to get the best ideas of what both parties have to offer and by sitting down and talking about the issues. We have a fiscal policy which we put in place 18 months ago, before the recession, before the war on terror, before September 11, before the corporate scandals. That fiscal policy is not working.

Huge projected budget surpluses have turned to very large projected budget deficits. More people are out of work.

Confidence is down. People are worried about the future. Yet the economic team at the White House does not want to show up and talk about the economy. They will not come to an economic forum to talk about what is working and what is not, what is wrong and what is not, about how we fix this economy. They want to have nothing to do with that.

I do not think we ought to be ignoring economic security issues. That is at the heart of what we ought to be talking about these days.

We are trying very hard to say to our colleagues in the Senate on the Republican side: Join us; join us; forget the "I object" language; let's join together.

How about saying: Include me. We would say: Absolutely. Yes, let's include everybody here. Let's get the best of what both have to offer this country.

It appears to me the refrain now for the rest of the session is: I object. I object.

I come from farm country, and our farmers have suffered a disastrous drought, not just in the southern part of my State but in a very wide region of this country.

One of my colleagues made a point that I think is interesting: We ought to give droughts a name. We do not ever call them anything. At least with hurricanes we name them. Then pretty soon, Hurricane Andrew starts moving around and people talk about Hurricane Andrew. We need to start naming droughts as well. It is a natural disaster. It is something farmers cannot help. They did not create it. They cannot control it. Yet they plant the seeds in the spring and come out to harvest it, and it is a moonscape. There is nothing there. Nothing grew, and they lost everything they had because they put it all in the ground in the spring hoping they would harvest a crop in the fall, and there is no crop. That is a disaster.

We passed a disaster bill with 79 votes in the Senate—79 votes, Republicans and Democrats.

It is October 17 and no disaster bill. Why? The White House does not want one. The House of Representatives will not do one.

According to today's news clips, a House Republican source said that Republican members seeking more money for drought relief, or for any number of projects, were simply told no and encouraged to be good Republicans and to wait until next year. They are taking the circus tent down.

I do not know, if after 79 Senators have voted for drought relief, recognizing there is a very big problem, if somehow there is a curtain that prevents information from coming into the other body to tell the Speaker of the House we have a big problem in this country, if he somehow missed the evening news week after week, somehow missed the story that there was a protracted, devastating drought in this country—I do not know how we would

tell him on October 17 if there is a problem.

You had better believe there is a problem. Why no disaster relief after the Senate passed it on a bipartisan basis, 79 votes in favor of it? Why? Why no disaster relief? Because "I object," they say; "I object." They object at the White House; they object in the U.S. House; they object.

There are so many issues that it is almost hard to know where to start. I want to describe one other issue, if I may. There is a young man named Jonathan Adelstein. Jonathan Adelstein is a nominee to the Federal Communications Commission. The FCC has a number of Republican seats and a number of Democratic seats. That is the way the seats are apportioned. This is a Democratic seat. It was vacated a year ago last month. For 13 months, this seat at the Federal Communications Commission has been open.

Senator DASCHLE went to the White House, described the nominee. The White House announced its intent to nominate him on February 8. They sent it to the Senate in July. On July 16, the Commerce Committee held a hearing, reported out of the Commerce Committee in July. Now the FCC is poised to make very serious and difficult decisions on a wide range of issues that will have a profound impact on this country's telecommunications policies, especially on rural States.

This seat is vacant. Know why? Because we have people that are singing the same song: I object. I object to bringing his nomination to the floor of the Senate, they say. There is a hold on this nomination, and that seat on the Federal Communications Commission that is so critical to the interests of rural States in this country is now vacant.

If this Senate does not confirm this nomination before we adjourn sine die, then there is something fundamentally wrong with the way this body works. This is not a normal case of, for example, a judgeship that may or may not be controversial.

The Federal Communications Commission has Republican seats and Democratic seats. The nominees on each side, if they are qualified—and Mr. Adelstein is eminently qualified—ought to be confirmed by the Senate. It is nonsense to hold up this nominee.

The chairman of the FCC, Mr. Powell, and others are poised to make very big decisions. I worry very much there is no one inside that circle who has rural America, smaller States, rural States, family farms, and small towns as their interest. These decisions will have a profound impact on the future of my State and others, and yet this nomination is awaiting action by the Senate, held up by some unnamed Senator who says, in effect, in a cloakroom, behind the cloak of secrecy, "I object."

So much for the Federal Communications Commission nomination. This is another issue that Congress is being blocked from taking care of.

A couple of days ago, my colleague from Nevada brought our attention to legislation the Senate has already passed and which is now in conference. He brought to the attention of the Senators the importance of something called concurrent receipt.

Concurrent receipt sounds like a two-dollar word and probably does not affect anybody in this Chamber. It may not affect anybody listening to me at the moment. I do not know. But it is important because there is an obscure Federal law that says the following: If you served this country in the Armed Forces and retired, and you spent 20 years, for example, in uniform serving this country of ours and you earned a retirement, and along the way you may have fought in a battle somewhere and been severely wounded and are entitled to disability payments, this obscure Federal law says, oh, by the way, you cannot have both the retirement you earned and the disability payments you deserve as a result of your disability. You cannot have concurrent receipt of those two payments. One will offset the other and you will lose your retirement or you will lose your disability payment.

I put a statement in the RECORD the other day about some North Dakota National Guardsmen. These are the kind of people who are being affected by this foolish provision in Federal law that we need to change, and which the Senate is on record of wanting to change.

Sixty years ago, on October 10, 1942, two thousand men from North Dakota embarked for war. They were from the 164th Infantry Regiment of the National Guard. They were people from small towns and family farms. They came from almost every city, village, and county in our State. They were ordered to the West Coast the day after Pearl Harbor, and arrived in the South Pacific in the spring of 1942.

On the island of Guadalcanal, these North Dakota National Guardsmen were called to action. The United States Marines had begun the first offensive action against Japan on Guadalcanal, and by autumn of that year it was a precarious deadlock. At that point, these National Guardsmen arrived October 13. By noon, they had their first casualty from a bombing run by Japanese planes. As Japanese ground patrols tested the U.S. positions, the 164th Infantry advanced. They were the first unit of the U.S. Army to go on the offensive against the Japanese in World War II.

On October 24 and 25, there was an intense Japanese attack, the largest battle fought on Guadalcanal. The "Citizen Soldiers," as they were called, were called forward to reinforce the Marines. Despite the blackness of night, these National Guardsmen traveled with their heavy packs, in the rain, over narrow trails slippery with mud, following their Marine escorts to the front line, holding on to the backpacks of the man in front of them to avoid being lost.

Fighting side by side with the Marines, the 164th Infantry poured relentless fire through the night into continuous waves of oncoming Japanese. At dusk of the next day, the Japanese attacked again. The situation was so precarious, they said, that cooks, messengers, and clerks manned positions and waited for the worst. Even the musicians from the band were pressed into service as litter bearers. Every member of the 164th had a role in the fiercest battle of that campaign.

At the end of that night, by dawn, it was clear the enemy had suffered a disastrous defeat. In front of the 164th Infantry were 1,700 dead Japanese. The North Dakota unit, meanwhile, suffered 26 killed and 52 wounded. The commanding officer of the Marines sent them a special message for coming to the aid of the United States Marines. LTC Robert Hall received the Navy Cross for his leadership of the battalion in this action.

The men of that regiment won a Navy Cross, 5 Distinguished Service Crosses, 40 Silver Stars, more than 300 Purple Hearts, and many Soldier's Medals and Legions of Merit. Its boast was it would leave no one behind, and indeed it had no men missing in action, although they had lost many.

These survivors are now old men in North Dakota, living again in our villages, small towns, and family farms. Some of them are being told that, if they were wounded in this battle of Guadalcanal and they continued their service in the United States military and have a retirement and a disability coming, they cannot receive both. They might have earned their retirement and they might have taken a devastating wound in their body that took years of convalescence, but they cannot receive disability and retirement. That is terribly unfair, in my judgment.

The Senate is already on record trying to correct this, and we are now hearing once again that the refrain of "I object" exists in the conference on the Defense Authorization Bill that can fix the problem.

I hope that the conference will overcome those objections and do the right thing.

Finally, the issue of corporate responsibility. I began talking about the economy and economic security. Let me talk for a moment about corporate responsibility. We have a great deal of unfinished business with this issue. We passed a corporate responsibility bill in the Senate, and it is a good bill. It falls a little short of what is needed, but it is a good bill and a step in the right direction.

It was fascinating to me to see what happened. We pushed the bill under the leadership of Senator SARBANES. The Republicans pushed back and said: We do not want a bill. We do not want your bill. We do not want to do it your way.

Finally, the President agreed, the Republicans agreed, and we passed the legislation. For 3 days before we passed

that bill in the Senate, I was trying to offer an amendment and it was blocked by the Republicans. My amendment was very simple. It said if someone is running an American corporation and they are running that company into bankruptcy and are getting bonus payments and incentive pay as they run that company into the ground, we ought to be able to recapture that and require disgorgement of that money.

A study was done and it shows of the 25 largest corporations that went into bankruptcy in the last several years, 208 executives took \$3.3 billion out of those corporations as they went into bankruptcy. Let me say that again. Of the 25 largest bankruptcies, 208 executives took \$3.3 billion in compensation as those companies were run into the ground.

I don't need five reasons. There is not even one good reason we ought to allow one to keep bonus and incentive pay as they take a public corporation into the ground. There is no incentive for bonus that is justifiable for someone presiding over bankruptcy. We should have passed that amendment. We will someday. I will continue to offer it as part of our unfinished business.

Another area of unfinished business is that we have a Securities and Exchange Commission without a leader who will lead. Mr. Pitt is the wrong man in the wrong place at the wrong time. Senator MCCAIN was the first to call for his resignation this summer. Larry Cudlow, Republican television personality on the Cudlow Kramer show, has called for his resignation, others have followed. The fact is, at this point we don't need a kinder and gentler SEC. We don't need a Securities and Exchange Commission that will bend in the wind of the political system to determine who should head an accounting reform board the American people could look up to and trust. What we need is a Securities and Exchange Commission chairman who does not care about the politics, who only cares about being a fair, tough, aggressive regulator. We need a chairman who will make sure we do not have additional Enrons and Tycos, who ensures that we do not have additional circumstances where the people at the bottom lose their shirts, the employees lose their jobs, and the people at the top walk off with pockets of gold to live in gated communities and count their money while everyone else is left in the wreckage.

We need a head of the SEC who can inspire confidence in the American people that effective regulation will prevent accounting firms, law firms, or corporations from cooking the books and enriching the people at the top at the same time they are costing the people at the bottom their jobs and costing investors their life savings.

I chaired hearings on the Enron issue in the Senate. One of my constituents in North Dakota is far removed from Houston, TX, but he worked for Enron, for a pipeline company. He wrote a letter and said: Mr. Senator, I had my life

savings in my 401(k) plan invested in Enron. I am the first to admit it was pretty dumb to do it, but I did it because I worked for this company for many years and believed in the company. Mr. Lay and other executives told us employees that if we invested in their company, our futures would be better and brighter. They told us that it was a future of growth.

And I did. I put my 401(k) into Enron stocks. It was my life savings for me and my family. I had \$330,000 in my 401(k). It is now worth \$1,700. His question for me was: What do I do to provide for my family's security and retirement?

Mr. REID. What were those numbers?

Mr. DORGAN. This man put \$330,000 into a 401(k) account and invested in Enron stock, a move that he felt would give he and his family security in retirement. He wrote a letter saying that 401(k) account is not worth \$330,000 anymore; it is \$1,700.

It breaks your heart.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. DORGAN. I am happy to yield.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. You will recall during the Enron hearings that the Senator from North Dakota chaired, one of the witnesses, a former Enron employee from the Orlando, FL, area, where Enron has one of its subsidiaries, the Florida Gas Company. We remember the very sad story of that lady. Her life savings was in the pension plan of the company, \$750,000, and because they would not let her get into that retirement account to sell it—while, by the way, the corporate executives were selling their stock—the value of that retirement fund for that Enron employee from Florida plummeted to \$20,000. She lost her entire life savings.

Mr. DORGAN. I say to the Senator from Florida, that Enron employee was locked out, as were the other employees. They could not sell, could not get rid of it even as the stock value was plunging. They lost their fortunes, and the folks at the top had all the flexibility in the world to sell their own stock.

The board of directors called what they found inside this corporation “appalling”. More than anything, I am angry, really angry at the way the big shots treated themselves, like hogs at the trough, and the way they let everybody else dangle in the wind. The people at the bottom lost everything they had, including their jobs, in most cases, with the big shots never expressing remorse or regret.

There is something fundamentally wrong about what has happened. Part of this we fixed in the corporate responsibility bill. However, there is, as of yet, much unfinished business to address.

Mr. REID. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. DORGAN. I am happy to yield.

Mr. REID. A constituent of yours from North Dakota started out with \$330,000 in his retirement account and wound up with \$1,700. The Senator

spoke on the floor before about Ken Lay at Enron and others. How much money did they take, separate and apart from whatever they made by selling their stock, just a reward for their malfeasance in running the corporation, does the Senator know?

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. Lay left with somewhere close to \$300 million. All the folks at the top were very generous to themselves.

Mr. REID. Did he get a pension of half a million a year for life, that is \$450,000 a year, for life?

Mr. DORGAN. It is pretty clear that at these corporations, Tyco or others, the folks at the top took very good care of themselves. As the folks at the bottom were losing their investments or jobs, the folks at the top were counting their money. That is what makes me so angry about all of this.

Let me come back to where I started. I started talking about our agenda at the end of this session, and what we ought to have completed but is not yet done. When families began talking about their lot in life, they talk about simple things important to the lives of their families. Do I have good health care? Do grandpa and grandma have access to a good doctor? Do I live in a safe neighborhood? Do I have a decent job? Does my job pay well? Does it have security? Those are the things important in people's lives.

I talked about what we have tried to do in this session of Congress, only to confront a mountain of objection from those who don't want to get it done. To so many things, “I object,” they say. These are people who never want to do anything the first time. I talked about the Patients' Bill of Rights which we never got done this Congress. We had a big debate and got it through the Senate and yet it is still not done. Why? Because “I object,” they say. Those who stand on behalf of the insurance industry and the managed care organizations are saying, “I object.”

I held a hearing in the State of Nevada with Senator REID. I will never, ever, forget that hearing, and nor will he, I expect. This is about managed care and why it is desperately necessary to get a Patients' Bill of Rights done. A woman stood at this hearing and she had brought to the hearing a color picture of her son that she had turned into a very large poster. Her son's name was Chris. He was 16 years old. As she began to speak at this hearing, she held that picture of Chris above her head.

She said: My son was 16 years old when he was diagnosed with cancer. She said: My son was denied the treatment he needed when he needed it to give him a shot at winning this battle with cancer. She said: Before my son died, he looked up at me from his bed and said, “Mom, how can they do this to me? How can they do this to a kid?” She was crying and crying as she spoke about her son.

Her point was very simple. No 16-year-old boy in this country, ever,

under any circumstances, ought to have to fight cancer and their managed care organization at the same time. That, by God, is an unfair fight. Everybody in this country knows it. We ought to do something about it.

Do you think this is something that happens in just one circumstance? It is not. I have had hearings in New York, in Nevada, in Minnesota, in Chicago, and at every hearing we hear exactly the same thing. Men, women, and children are told: You go ahead and fight your disease. But then they must fight the managed care organization to get payment for the treatment. Or maybe they must fight to get the treatment that they won't get unless they win a fight with the managed care organization, a fight that too many people, too often, lose.

It is not a fair fight. It is why we have decided to simply say that there are basic rights people ought to have when they deal with their managed care organizations. Every patient has a right to know all of their options for medical treatment—not just the cheapest. It is very simple.

My point is that we have a lot of unfinished business. The Patients' Bill of Rights is just one thing we haven't gotten done. I have described four or five more things today.

I regret that we are here at the end of this session, talking about the unfinished business. But the fact is, we have people in this Chamber who have become professional objectors. I object, I object, they say. It doesn't matter what the subject is—I object.

This country has a very serious problem with its economy. As I said earlier, it is appropriate for us to have been talking about national security because that is a deadly serious issue. But it is also imperative we talk about economic security because that is an issue that is important in the life of every family and every American person as well.

I would say to the President: You have had substantial cooperation from those of us in this caucus, here in this Chamber, on national security issues. Give us a little cooperation as well on economic security issues. Bring Air Force One back here to Washington, DC. Don't spend the next 3 weeks out on the road campaigning. Spend a little time here with us, talking about economic security, and fixing what is wrong with this economy.

Eighteen months ago when the President proposed his fiscal policy, we were told that we were going to have budget surpluses as far as the eye could see. No problem, they said, we are going to have budget surpluses forever.

Some of us felt that maybe it was our role to be a bit conservative then, and ask: What if something happens? Can you really see 6 months out, or 12 months or 2 years or 3 years out? Can you really see that far ahead and anticipate what might be? What if something happens? We think it is pretty unwise to commit ourselves to a fiscal

policy that says let's have a \$1.7 trillion tax cut over 10 years, anticipating everything is going to be really strong and positive for our economy.

What happened is 5 months later we discovered we were in a recession. We discovered that terrorists hit New York City and the Pentagon, hijacking four airplanes. We discovered we are at war against terrorism. We discovered the most outrageous set of corporate scandals in this country's history. All these things converged at the same intersection, at the same time, all undermining the confidence of the American people in the future of this economy.

You can say what you want about this economy. It is not an economy where there are dials and gauges and levers in the engine room of this ship of state, where all we have to do is walk down there and adjust them to make the ship move right along without a problem. That is not the way the economy works.

I know there are people in the Fed, in monetary policy, and people in fiscal policy, who really have an inflated sense of self-importance about their role in the economy. This economy is only about and all about people's confidence. People are either confident about the future or they are not. If they are confident about the future, our economy expands because they do the things that manifest that confidence: They buy cars, houses, take trips, they do the things that expand the economy. If they lack confidence, they do exactly the opposite and that causes contraction.

The American people are very concerned about this economy. It would serve this country well, in my judgment, if the President would join us, all of us, and sit down and talk seriously about what we need to do to put this economy back on track, make this economy strong again, make this economy grow again and produce jobs and expand once again, and turn these budget deficits into budget surpluses and invest in the things that provide better lives for the American people: Health care, education—the things we know work to improve life for the American people. That is what we ask of this President.

Let me conclude by saying there is not a Republican or Democratic way to fix all of this. There is only the opportunity for people to sit down and reason together and compromise and find the best of a series of good ideas. But you cannot do that when there is a one-lyric song or one-chorus song here in this Chamber that says to everything, every proposal, every suggestion: I object, I object, I object. That does not serve this country's interest at this point in time.

This October 17, this country faces real challenges. It is time for all of us to take a deep breath, to ask the President to take a little time off the campaign trail to join us, and to work together to see if there is not a better

way to deal with national security, improving the economy, and addressing the concerns of people across the country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I compliment the Senator from North Dakota for his brilliant statement. I also say not only should the President stop his campaign travels—or, if he wants to do them, they should be paid for by political parties and not by taxpayers. That is the concern I have with these travels.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senator from Florida be recognized for up to 20 minutes. I know Senator GRAMM wishes to speak. His staff would now have an idea, as to when the Senator from Florida will be finished.

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

The Senator from Florida.

NASA

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I am going to speak about the management of one of the most exciting little agencies in the Federal Government, NASA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

The Senator from North Dakota has just put his finger on a number of problems with regard to our national economy, a subject that I addressed yesterday. I compliment him for his comments, his insight into the multiplicity of problems that are facing our country at this time. There is much to be done.

I would like to focus today on a particular part of the Federal Government, of which I have some credentials to offer some suggestions. If we don't pay attention to the direction the National Aeronautics and Space Administration is headed, we are going to get off on a wrong track and there are going to be some mistakes made. They can be mistakes everyone in this country would regret.

I shared with the administrator of NASA my hope for his success. He came through our Commerce Committee. We had both private and public meetings. We had a lengthy hearing for his confirmation. We will continue to have hearings.

I have suggested to the administrator that it appears the White House and the Office of Management and Budget are going to be unwilling to offer to NASA a budget that would increase its buying power. Its basically \$15 billion budget in current-year spending is basically the same as it was 10 years ago. This is a little agency that has achieved so much and its achievements are the embodiment of the hopes and dreams of Americans as we fulfill our role as adventurers and explorers—a characteristic of the American people that we never want to give up. If we do, we will be a second-rate nation.

This country was founded by explorers. This country was expanded by ex-

plorers and adventurers. Then the frontier was westward. Now the frontier is upward. And here on Earth the frontier is inward.

We never want to give up that adventure because we will not fulfill the destiny that is resident in the hearts of all Americans, that we want to be adventurers and explorers.

But, in this Senator's opinion, NASA is not going to be able to fulfill that role and achieve that destiny if we keep starving NASA. NASA cannot do that in the year 2003 on a budget that was the same budget in fiscal year 1991—12 years ago. So if the White House and the Office of Management and Budget continue to starve NASA of its funds, there has to be some kind of relief.

I have suggested to the administrator a \$5 billion item in the national budget over the next 5 years that is for the development of technologies of a follow-on to the space shuttle.

The space shuttle originally was going to be extending its lifetime to about the year 2007. Then it was extended to 2012. Now the word out of NASA is that the present fleet of four orbiters is going to continue so that we will have assured access to space for humankind through the year 2020.

It is a reliable vehicle. We have the best space team in the world. We have the finest launch team in the world at the Kennedy Space Center. But we can't continue to operate safely with the continued starving of NASA funds by the administration.

I have suggested to the Administrator that one aspect he should look at as a program is development of new technologies for a new kind of vehicle, a reusable vehicle, that would be scheduled to go after the year 2020.

That is also an item that is of considerable interest to the Department of Defense. The DOD, being flush with money, could fund that, with NASA having the management of that research, which it does so well and, therefore, give some relief in the NASA budget so that what was left over could be applied to what was necessary; that is, safety upgrades on the space shuttle.

So there is no question that we are doing everything possible to have that space transportation system be as safe as possible even though we know it is risky business. When you defy the laws of gravity, when you go at mach 25, when you circle the globe in 90 minutes, when you come through 3,000 degrees Fahrenheit of searing heat on reentry, it is risky business. So we cannot afford to do anything less than upgrade all of the things that we have in the pipeline for the shuttle safety upgrades.

At the same time, our Nation is in the midst of building the largest engineering accomplishment of all time. We are building a space station. It is a multinational effort. By the time it is completed, it will weigh 1 million pounds, it will have an acre of solar