

Of course, the consequence of that kind of spending policy which has a tendency to aggravate the deficit lays the groundwork for our colleagues on the other side to say, the American people are not taxed enough. We need to actually raise taxes in order to generate more revenue to pay for this additional spending.

This is exactly the kind of response we do not need. As demonstrated by the charts, as demonstrated by the booming economy, we have, as a result of the low tax policy and the pro-growth policies of the last 6 years, the American economy could not be stronger or better.

I hope we will all be edified by this factual data demonstrated on the charts and that the misimpression that the distinguished majority leader was under when he called the economy bleak will be now disabused. I hope he will see from the charts and from my comments—not because I said it but because this is what the facts demonstrate—the low tax and pro-growth policies we have had over the last 6 years have served the American people very well and that 7.4 million new jobs have been created in America since August 2003. That, indeed, should be what we are all about.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Idaho is recognized.

Mr. CRAIG. The Senator from Colorado is going to speak a little longer, but he has agreed I can interject myself but for a moment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is recognized.

A VALENTINE TO MY FAMILY

Mr. CRAIG. Madam President, today is an essential day in my life. It is not just Valentines Day. It happens to be the anniversary of the first date I had with my wife Suzanne. Am I a romantic? Well, maybe just a little bit.

Little did I know then that one day we would be celebrating the first date as a married couple with three children and nine grandchildren.

Over the years, I have taken to the Senate to announce the news of our growing family and I ask my colleagues' indulgence again today to send a special valentine to the two most recent additions to our family.

Born November 20 of 2004, a beautiful granddaughter named Lily Terese Craig. On April 18 of 2006, another beautiful grandchild, Damon Oliver Craig, was born into our family. It is a thrill to be a granddad to these wonderful children. It has been a great joy to hold them, to love them, to see them around, and to watch them grow.

My wife Suzanne and I look forward to many happy experiences with Lily and Damon and the rest of our crew. Often we come to the Senate to talk about momentous and meaningful events, but there is no more important event than when grandchildren enter our lives.

Let me thank my colleagues. Let me thank my colleague from Colorado for letting me share with all how much we enjoy these new lives in our family on this Valentines Day.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Colorado is recognized.

Mr. SALAZAR. Madam President, let me congratulate my good friend from Idaho, Senator CRAIG and Suzanne and their grandchildren, Lily and Damon. I wish your family the very best. The family in Idaho, obviously, is where the roots are. Our families are so important to all of us, and we appreciate the Senator coming to the floor and sharing that special valentine message not only with the family but with the Nation and our colleagues in the Senate.

FORGOTTEN AMERICA

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I come to the Senate to speak about the forgotten America. That is the rural America which is a wide expanse of the geographic area of these United States. When I came to the Senate 2 years ago, I gave my maiden speech about forgotten America, the rural parts of our country which have been in decline decade after decade after decade.

I did so because if you look at my own history, I come from a place that is 300 miles to the south of Denver, a place that has the name of Conejos, in English meaning rabbit county. It is one of the four poorest counties in the United States of America. In that county, as in so many counties across America, you see the kinds of problems that describe the two Americas we have. We have the America of prosperity, much of that part of America lying within the metropolitan areas of our great Nation, and we have the other America, the forgotten America, the America that struggles on the vine every day to stay alive, the part of America that has great disparity in terms of the kind of health care and the kind of education and the kind of economic opportunity that exists for them.

In my own State of Colorado, there were 64 counties, and out of the 64 counties, even in the great boom of the 1990s when unemployment was nonexistent and our economy was growing at a very rapid pace, most of those counties were withering on the vine. They were declining in population. Their population was aging. They were struggling with health care. They were struggling with a whole host of issues that affect those communities.

Out of the 64 counties in Colorado during the period of 2000 to 2005, 21 of them actually declined in population. That is a third of my State that was actually declining in population. The fact is that same statistic can apply for many other States, including Nebraska, the Dakotas, Idaho, and most of our States around the country.

I am very hopeful, as we move forward in the 110th Congress, that under

the great leadership of Senator TOM HARKIN from Iowa, we will be able to put together a farm bill that will help revitalize rural America and will help us put the spotlight on what has been the forgotten America.

Even as we start the process of moving forward and addressing the issues set forth in the 10 titles of the farm bill, we already see some statistics that to all of us should be alarming. At a hearing we had earlier this week, there was testimony provided to us that the per capita investment in rural America is about \$550 less than it is in urban communities. That is because the formulas we have for community development block grants and other investments the Federal Government makes to help communities ends up, in a very disappointing way, affecting rural communities in these negative ways. I am hopeful, as we move forward with the farm bill, we will be able to correct some of these disparities and create new opportunities for rural America.

We will see one of those opportunities created with our efforts to grow our way to energy independence. The fact of the matter is, both Democrats and Republicans, progressives and conservatives, are coming together to recognize the fact that growing our way to energy independence is a matter of national security, a matter of economic security, and a matter of environmental security. I am tremendously optimistic about what we can do with the new farm bill.

Mr. President, today I speak briefly about two pieces of legislation I have introduced or will soon be introducing that are part of that agenda to try to help rural America. The first, a bipartisan legislation that creates a rural leasing institute. It is legislation which I am proudly sponsoring with Senator PRYOR, my good friend and former attorney general from Arkansas and Senator CHAMBLISS and Senator ISAKSON.

This legislation creates a rural policing institute to make sure our law enforcement in rural communities has a similar kind of opportunity that law enforcement has in the major metropolitan areas. In my State of Colorado, we have about 14,000 peace officers. I had the great honor as the attorney general of that State to serve as the chairman of the board that certified all the law enforcement officers in my State for a period of 6 years. There is a big difference between the kind of training rural law enforcement officers get and the kind of training provided to law enforcement areas in the metropolitan communities. Of the 14,000 peace officers in Colorado, 7,000 of the people work in departments that have fewer than 15 officers. They cannot afford the kind of training to protect themselves and to protect the public safety that other larger metropolitan police organizations can afford.

Therefore, our effort to move forward with this rural policing institute is to

allow our national Government to provide training opportunities to the thousands upon thousands of police officers who live in rural communities and who work every day to protect the public safety of their communities.

I hope our colleagues will join in the passage of this legislation. Last year, this legislation enjoyed the unanimous support of the Senate. I am hopeful we will again have that same kind of support.

In conclusion, let me say that the forgotten America is, indeed, much of rural America. It is that part of rural America which we know is so important to us because of the values we find there, the bedrock values of what America is all about. It is a pioneering spirit of the West. It is the place where the food security of our Nation so depends.

If you walk into my office, for many years I have had on my desk a sign that says: No farms, no food. No farms, no food. I would hope, as we make that statement—as I make that statement—we recognize we should never compromise the food security of the United States of America. We, obviously, have done that in a very negative and disastrous way with respect to our energy dependence on foreign countries today. We ought not to do the same thing with food security.

Our ability to revitalize rural America and to enact a farm bill that will help us revitalize rural America is very much at the heart of how we take care of this forgotten America.

(The remarks of Mr. SALAZAR pertaining to the introduction of S. 583 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum and ask unanimous consent that the time be equally divided.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MENENDEZ). Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the continuing resolution before the Senate, H. J. Res. 20, to point out some of the flaws in the bill. Because we have the potential for a Government shutdown, I believe it is my responsibility to vote for the legislation.

I am reluctant to be in the position of voting for a \$463 billion spending bill with no capability for amendment. We passed appropriations bills out of the Senate last year. They reflected the Senate's priorities. Yet this measure changes many of the priorities that

were set in last year's bills, and we haven't had the opportunity for hearings, committee markups, or to offer any amendments from the floor. That is not the way the Senate has done business, certainly not the Appropriations Committee. The Appropriations Committee has been quite bipartisan throughout the time I have been a member.

I don't like to see this type of precedent being set. The last time Republicans took over from Democrats, there were 11 appropriations bills not yet finished. We didn't do a continuing resolution and fill up the tree so there couldn't be amendments. We did an Omnibus appropriations bill. We debated it for 6 days. We timed it so that people had full access to amendments and the process. We had 100 amendments. That was 2003. I am very concerned about this type of process. But we are now 1 day before the end of the previous continuing resolution, which means we could see a Government shutdown if we can't come to agreement.

I said last week that we had time for amendments and to confer with the House. The amendment I put forward with 27 cosponsors, the Hutchison-Inhofe amendment, would have fully restored the \$3.1 billion that was taken out of military construction that was preparation for the movement of troops home from overseas, as well as many other base changes that were going to be made. I asked for the restoration of that with 27 cosponsors, and my amendment was ruled out of order.

I know there was bipartisan support for those many military construction projects. And since I am the ranking member and previously the chairman of that subcommittee, I know how important they are. I know they were so important that the chairman of all the services, plus the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, wrote a letter saying: Please do not fund with a continuing resolution the military construction projects because there will not be enough to fully cover our needs. The Secretary of Defense said the same thing.

We are not going to be able to do what is right for our military because \$3 billion was taken out of the Senate-passed appropriations bill and converted to other projects. It was spread around throughout the other agencies, and the military construction was the pay-for. I tried to correct that, and I have to say that the distinguished majority leader did make an effort to work with the House to make my amendment in order. He was not able to do that. I accept that, and I accept that he tried. I do believe he tried. I think Senator REID did make an effort.

But we have a process here which is not one anyone can be proud of; that is, a \$463 billion spending bill, taking \$3 billion away from military construction, putting it into other priorities, and not allowing amendments. It is not right, and I protested.

I am going to vote for the bill. I think we have to do it.

I am very concerned about the NASA funding. There is money taken out of the ongoing, very important priority of getting the crew return vehicle that is the successor to the shuttle online on time. I cannot imagine we would take money out of that program, which was done in this bill, which would potentially delay us years down the road from having the crew return vehicle that is set to replace the shuttle. The shuttle is set to go out of existence in 2010, possibly 2011. We need the shuttle to finish the space station. But the Administrator, Michael Griffin, has said we need to retire the shuttle as soon as possible. We have to finish the space station. The new crew return vehicle will not be able to carry big parts up to the space station. It will not be heavy enough. But we need to close the gap so we don't have a time when the United States is not able to send people into space, and that is what is going to happen if the crew return vehicle is not able to be produced when the shuttle goes out of existence.

I think we are putting NASA in jeopardy. I met with Senator BILL NELSON, the chairman of the NASA Subcommittee, of which I am ranking member. We met with Michael Griffin and members of the staff of the Appropriations Committee who assured Michael Griffin he would have the ability to transfer money out of other accounts to go there. But I am concerned about it. Why was the money moved out of that account in the first place? That doesn't seem like the proper way to do business. But we are going to watch that very carefully.

Senator NELSON and I are very bipartisan in our approach to NASA. We both believe it is most important for us to have human spaceflight capabilities for the United States of America. It is a national security issue as well as a scientific issue that we stay in the forefront of science, and the lead we have had by going into space early is unmatched by any other country. Our lead is so important for our national security and the dominance we have had in space. The ability we have had to guide missiles from space is a phenomenal advantage America has been able to achieve by conquering space. If we don't have the ability to put humans in space for some period of time—3 to 5 years—what are we going to do? Are we going to go and beg the Russians? Who knows, by 2010 or 2011, whether the Russians would even give us space on their shuttles, much less give us the accommodations we would need and perhaps the secrecy we would need.

I am concerned about this bill. If we were not facing a potential shutdown of the Government and many important programs, including benefits to veterans and military pay, I would vote no, just as I did vote against cloture because I thought we still had time to do this right. We should have had time