

economy was not the central concern of the American people. At a time when it is the central concern of the American people, we cannot be talking about raising taxes by tens of billions of dollars. We need to be expanding the family budget, not the Federal budget. The House should know that in this economy, this is a principle Senate Republicans will defend aggressively.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. McCASKILL). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business for up to 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

Mr. SCHUMER. 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. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

OBSTRUCTIONISM

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, today I am here to talk about the obstructionism across the aisle and how it is hurting our country, preventing progress, preventing change at a time when Americans demand change. This chart says it all: 73 Republican filibusters and counting.

The Republican Party, Leader McConnell, and others have pointed out that a handful of the filibusters may have been started by Democrats. We can look at the circumstances of those. Maybe those were done because there was no choice, because somebody else was delaying in another way. But let's say there were 10 of these that are Democratic. Then we will change this number from 73 to 63. It is still overwhelming. It is still the record.

The point we are making is very simple: This Republican minority, unable to put forward its own agenda, unable because they are not in sync with America, can only obstruct. If you had a single word to describe the tenor of the Republican minority this year and last year, this session of Congress thus far, it would be "obstruct." If you needed two words, it would be "obstruct, obstruct." If you needed a few more words, it would be "obstruct, obstruct, and then obstruct again; get in the way."

Admittedly, this body was designed, in the wisdom of the Founding Fathers, to be the cooling saucer. This body is supposed to take a careful look and slow things down. But there are times when history demands change. There are times when the minority has understood that, and even though they would modify the way change occurs, they don't stand in the way and just say no. This is one of those times.

Technology has changed our world. It is not the same world it was even 10 or 15 years ago.

Technology has created terrorism. Why? Small groups of bad people have been enabled by technology to strike at New York or London or Madrid and innocent civilians.

Technology has created one global labor market in so many different areas. It means the kids in the schools of New York or Arkansas or Missouri have to compete with the kids at schools in Berlin and Beijing and Bangor. It means that jobs are competing. It used to be New York State would compete with Connecticut and New Jersey and Pennsylvania and Missouri and Arkansas. Now we compete around the globe. That is technology, nothing else.

Technology has allowed us all to live longer. Praise God. The average life expectancy goes up and up and up. I have a Dad who is 84. He plays golf. Thirty years ago, a man 84 was rare, and when someone was 84, they were old and frail. My dad, who led a hard life—so happy he now has a nice, happy life—is active. He drives all around, argues with my mother about how far he can drive, and all of that.

We live longer, but that creates new strains on us as well. What about health care for our elderly people? The costs go up, and every one of us would give our right arm to see our mother or father have another good year of health, or husband or wife or child. It means pensions and what we do with later-life changes. It also means we live longer and things get stretched out. People get married later. They are not in a rush to get married and have a family. They find careers later. They experiment. In the day when you had to just get a job quickly—a lot of people don't do that anymore. So it has changed that.

Technology has even changed little things. Our parents felt very much in control of us. I would get home at 3 o'clock from grade school, and I would go out on my street to play. It was baby boom time. There were 50, 60 kids. We played all kinds of games and ran around. These days, more likely, the children stay home. They are on the Internet. Lord knows what they are seeing. It is a different world.

Technology has changed everything, and technology demands that the U.S. Government help people adjust to that technology so they can continue to have the great American life. That is what America is demanding—change. Look at the polls. They are unprece-

dented. How many people think our country, under George Bush's leadership, is moving in the right direction? A smaller and smaller percentage. How many people think we need significant change? A larger and larger percentage. We can argue about what that change should be, but change we must or our children and even ourselves in later years will not have the same good life we have today.

We on the Democratic side are seeking to bring about some of that change. Some of it is quite large—change the course of the war in Iraq, change our health care system, change our energy policy. Some of it is smaller but important.

What do we face from the other side? The word "no" and the word "no" again and the word "no" again. Using the Senate rules, which allow them to require 60 votes on even the smallest measures, they have slowed everything down. Again, the exact number is not the point; it is that they have set the record. Republican filibusters are rampant. A few of these are ours, many are theirs. They will get to 73 soon, I assure you.

Why do they do it? I will tell you why. I try to study history a little bit. I am hardly a Ph.D. in history, but I like to read about it, think about it. There are times when there is a paradigm shift in our politics. The year 1980 was one such time. Most of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle came in in that 1980 Ronald Reagan paradigm: strong security, shrink government, family values. Those were very attractive. Now the times have changed. The old way doesn't work. But their base—20 percent of the electorate but half, maybe more, of the Republican base—is stuck in that old world. So they have one foot in one camp. They see where the public is, but they can't move. Their base and their inability to break with that base have them paralyzed. So there is only one choice—obstruct, say no. When you can't say yes about anything, say no. That is what they have done—63, 65, 67, 68, 69. Again, we are busy calculating how many, but it is a whole lot, and it is a record.

Let me talk about one example, the housing crisis. Our economy is heading south. The numbers are not good. Unemployment is going up. Job creation is meager, anemic almost. The amount of income people have is declining, and expenses are going up. Just to continue to buy energy—oil, gas, heating oil—food, with prices that have gone through the roof because of energy in part, eats up all of most average families' extra income. So our economy is hurting.

What is at the bull's-eye of that economic downturn? It is housing, all kinds of problems. Again, the old philosophy, Reagan philosophy—don't regulate these new mortgage brokers—has led to a disaster. The banks were pretty regulated. They are not to blame in this crisis by and large, the initial

banks that made mortgages, the community banker, for instance, regulated by the Federal Government. But the mortgage brokers who are not affiliated with banks, unregulated, are clearly at the nub of this. They were unregulated, and that was the old philosophy on that side of the aisle—no regulation, let the buyer beware. Well, the buyer got hurt. But as we learned in economics, the person in the house next door, who is fully paid on his or her mortgage, got hurt because his or her housing values went down.

Now we even have a credit freeze because people so miscalculated—the great financial moguls so miscalculated the value of these mortgages, it has now cast into doubt the way we evaluate credit everywhere. The Port Authority of New York just paid 17 percent for a short-term bond. Everyone knows the Port Authority is going to pay it back—they have a great revenue stream—but still, people are worried.

So the only way we are going to get to turn this economy around is do some things with housing. We on the Democratic side proposed a modest package of five measures, many of which had bipartisan support—raising the mortgage revenue caps was proposed by President Bush—and every one of them was designed to be focused, not that expensive—some money but not a huge program, designed to bring support from the other side.

Then Senator REID went to the floor and said: There are good ideas from the other side of the aisle. Senator ISAKSON has a very interesting idea about a credit for first-time home buyers for a while to encourage people to buy homes and get this housing market going. Senator REID offered Senator MCCONNELL the opportunity—you offer your amendments, modify the housing package, and let's move forward.

Again, what did we get? I don't know what number it was: another block, another filibuster, another requirement that we are not going to let this go forward. We are either going to delay and delay and delay with countless amendments, irrelevant amendments, or we will not let you move forward on any of your amendments—either one fitting into this category of “filibuster.”

Why don't they join us? Here the economy is sinking, and yet we had one vote, I believe it was, on the other side of the aisle saying: Let's move forward and get a housing package.

We are willing to entertain your amendments—not amendments that have nothing to do with housing: the estate tax—you know, the old saws. Let's do that another time. We have done it before. I am sure we will do it again, probably on the budget that is coming up next week. But let's move forward on housing.

Senator REID was extremely generous in his offer. What was the answer? No. This chart, in other words, says: No.

Our country demands change. Housing is in crisis. The housing crisis has spread like ripples outward on a pond,

hurting—hurting—our economy, hurting it as a whole. Here we have a smart, well-designed, thoughtful, and not overly broad package of housing reforms, and instead of debating, the other side obstructs. Is it because there are few on that side of the aisle who say: No Government involvement, and they are able to exert their will on the whole Republican minority and say: Just stop it? Is it because most of the other side is scared of the Republican base that says: No Government involvement, let the economy sink?

We heard that from Herbert Hoover. We heard that from William McKinley. We have learned about the economy since those days. We have learned that smart government involvement, particularly when there is an economic downturn—people are hurting, jobs are not being created—is the right thing to do.

Again, we can debate what the right way to do it is. I am sure most on the other side would more prefer tax cuts. Some of us prefer some money for CDBG or mortgage counselors—some Government spending. But let's debate it, and let's come up with a result. And instead: No. Filibuster. Again, maybe it is No. 73, maybe it is No. 69, maybe it is No. 67. I don't know what number it is. They are busy calculating that upstairs. But it is a big two-letter number.

The only thing I can say, putting on my political hat—I will tell you, the public is demanding change. The times, they are a-changing. If you do not seek to make that change, you will be called accountable in November. I do not want that to happen. I want to see a good, robust election. I want to see Democrats pick up seats. But given the choice, I would much rather have us join together in constructive legislation and each get credit for it.

But that is not going to happen unless we have a change in attitude, unless we go back to the old ways when filibusters were used on issues of major import but not used routinely to block every single piece of legislation.

Let us hope the membership on the other side of the aisle will see the light. Let us hope they will see that mere obstructionism is not what the country wants. Let us hope they understand there is a demand for change out there in the country. And let us hope they will join with us in seeking that right degree of change with open debate, with discussion of relevant amendments, and moving forward to heal some of the economic wounds the country is now facing.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

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

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

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I ask to be notified after 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator will be notified.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, yesterday 12 Senators announced their intention to file 15 bills that would deal with the broken immigration system we have—15 responsible pieces of legislation that would be effective, in discrete, separate ways, to close some of the loopholes that are making our immigration system not work.

This is important. It is important for the Senate to undertake this. I believe we should follow through, in the wake of last year's defeat of the massive amnesty proposal, with what so many Members have promised: real reform and real enforcement and border security first. That was what we decided last summer, I think, by most observers. We decided that amnesty before enforcement was backwards, and we needed enforcement first. That is what we talked about, and that is what the vote indicated when there was a massive defeat of that comprehensive bill.

Now, the majority leader this morning, to my dismay, called that discussion yesterday fanfare. He said he hoped the American people can see what is going on here. Let's be frank about what is going on here. The majority leader, by those words, indicates to me he has no intention of moving forward with enforcement legislation. The leader of the Democrats in the Senate has indicated he does not want to go forward with it and that he is still in last year's and the year before's philosophy that the way to handle immigration is to refuse to pass anything that impacts positively enforcement until he is able to force through a massive amnesty.

I will not go into the details of that discussion last year, but it was honest and detailed and long. When the debate was over, the American people and this Senate voted it down. We rejected it because it will not work that way. We must have the enforcement first. There are so many loopholes out there.

It is disappointing. That is, frankly, where we are. Fourteen of his colleagues on the Democratic side voted to reject that plan. There were only 46 votes for it. You needed 60 to pass it. The suggestion that we are going to go back to a comprehensive plan such as that is not sound.

These bills that have been offered by a fine group of Senators are excellent, responsible pieces of legislation. They help control some of the problems we have. I am disappointed it looks as though we are going to have to work hard to force an opportunity to even get votes on some of these critically needed pieces of legislation.

Of the 15 bills that are in the package that was announced yesterday, over half of them have had prior votes in the Senate.