

honored to have her here. I was at a Banking Committee hearing and could not make it on time.

Rabbi Jacobs does an amazing amount of work in the Broward County area, helping people in need in all walks of life. She is always there to help. I am tremendously honored to have her here today. We are pleased that she was able to honor us with her prayer. We thank her for coming.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

STIMULUS PACKAGE

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, as you know, I very seldom come to the floor. Last week, I came to the floor to talk a little bit about the stimulus package that is before us now. Last night, we had a vote that blocked the Senate Finance Committee package. I know that probably sometime during the course of this day—or very soon—we will be voting on the House version of the stimulus package. I have to say that I realize I am a voice in the wilderness—actually more of a voice in the wilderness this week than last—but I continue to be almost shocked at the lack of debate regarding this stimulus package and its nature and effect on our economy.

This is a roughly \$150 billion package. Most of this package is oriented toward sprinkling, if you will, checks around our country. I know there are many people in our country in need, and there have been attempts to add various groups that “have been left out” of the package. I really feel for people around our country who are in tremendous economic distress. But I have to say that, to me—and this is just one opinion, and I have tremendous respect for this body and the various opinions that exist here—this has to be, in my humble opinion, one of the most irresponsible things we have done since I have been in the Senate.

I think about all the debate we have had here, for instance, regarding earmarks, the wasteful spending that can sometimes take place over congressional earmarks. I know the public has been focused on that particular item now for over a year, as that issue has been debated on the floor and as people have tried to weed out, if you will, wasteful earmarks.

In one fell swoop today—or tomorrow—we are going to be taking \$150 billion and, from the standpoint of having an effect on our economy for the long term, in essence, wadding it up and throwing it, for lack of a better expression, into a mud bowl. I have heard no

serious economists—and I have not read every economist—speak to the virtues of this stimulus package.

I think you know the President just put forth a budget that shows a \$410 billion budget deficit next year. All of us know that is not even close to the real number because operations in Afghanistan and Iraq are not fully funded by that budget.

We are talking about in 2009 a half-a-trillion-dollar budget deficit, money that none of us will ever, of course, pay for. Mr. President, you and I will never have anything to do with paying back this money. Our grandchildren and their children will pay this back.

As I mentioned last week on the floor, \$150 billion becomes in a generation, 20 years, \$322 billion. We, in essence, are borrowing this money. All of us know much of this money will be lent to us from countries such as China and other places. Most of us know that between the fiscal policy we are talking about today and the monetary policy that has been followed recently by the Fed, the U.S. dollar has devalued. Companies in our country are becoming greater bargains for people in other countries. There has been tremendous investment by other countries buying up companies in our country.

Many of the products people will spend this money on, if they spend it on items other than electricity bills and those kinds of items, will be products that are made in other countries.

All of us—and, Mr. President, I know you are new to this body as I am—came here recognizing the tremendous recklessness that has occurred as it relates to our country's fiscal and financial matters. I think all of us came here wanting to rectify that situation. I find it truly hard to believe there is such a rush in this Congress to take \$150 billion and sprinkle it around America as if we feel that is going to do something to stimulate our economy.

I know that much of this—again, I am not saying by any measure this relates to every Senator, but I know much of this is politically motivated, to make sure people in our country think we are doing something, even if it is wrong. I know this is an election year. In some ways, to some constituent groups, this might build political favor. I certainly have not had private conversations with every Senator, so that should be noted. But I have to tell my colleagues, in private, I have not found one Senator—not one—who believes what we are getting ready to do is going to do anything to stimulate this economy. Again, economists around the country are mentioning the fact daily that this will have little or no effect.

Recently a well-respected person I know, whom I will not quote, said: Look, this is an awful lot of money. It probably will not do any harm. I think about what \$150 billion would do invested in ways that actually created jobs for the long haul, whether it is in research, whether it is in promotion of

energy security, maybe doing something to solve some of the health issues we have in our country. Certainly, there are other ways for us to spend \$150 billion.

I have listened to some of the debates on the floor that go on for days, if you will, over spending \$1 billion or over spending \$10 billion maybe at a university or something such as that. I realized that in the very near future, this body, without any real debate, is getting ready to spend \$150 billion we will never pay back.

I will close with this, and I said this the last time I spoke. There are children all over America today in classrooms. We have some who got up this morning who are in front of us—our pages—at 5 in the morning and went to class at 6. They come here every day and work with us. They are looking to their parents, their teachers, their coaches, their Sunday school teachers to help teach them life principles and to help make decisions that hopefully will cause their lives to be more whole and more full, and hopefully from time to time they look to those of us in Washington to do the same—their elected officials.

I hope, and I say this with all due respect to the Members in this body who have a different opinion—this is solely my opinion, and I have deep respect for the other 99 Members of this body, but from my own personal vantage point, I hope they are not looking at us this week. I do not think there are many Members in this body who believe this \$150 billion these young people and their children will pay back is being spent in a meaningful way. I think many Members of this body realize this is an election-year stunt, if you will, to make it look as if we are addressing a problem when, in my humble opinion, we are not.

I do hope that sometime, in a bipartisan way, all of us can work together and address the fundamental fiscal problems which our country has to deal with. I know there is a bill that is going to be debated on the floor, hopefully in the near future, the Conrad-Gregg bill, to get us together and focus on Social Security and Medicare. Again, we have not even begun to see the stresses those programs are going to create for our country. Yet in this next fiscal year, we are looking at half a trillion dollars in a 1-year annual budget deficit.

We have been fiscally reckless as a country. As they say back in my home State, the chickens are going to come home to roost. I am tremendously discouraged that we in this body are getting ready to spend \$150 billion the way that we are and to ask these young pages and the young people across our country and the young people coming after them to pay the tap on that money so that in this election year, we can act like we have actually done something to solve a problem, when I think there are many in this body who know that is not what we are doing.

Obviously, it has been made clear, I am going to vote against the House package, the Senate package, and any other package that focuses on sprinkling money around America in a way we know is not going to affect our economy in any meaningful way.

Mr. President, as you know, it is a tremendous pleasure for me to serve with you in the Senate.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I wish to proceed for 10 minutes in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senate is in morning business.

ECONOMIC STIMULUS

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I wish to talk about the stimulus package and I wish to talk about our economy and I wish to talk about the Senate.

I am very frustrated with the Senate. We spent a week maneuvering and twisting over parliamentary procedure. Our processes are slowing us down in meeting the day-to-day needs of the American people and the long-range needs of our country.

Our country is at risk. We are fighting a global war against terrorism. Our dollar is worth a box of Kleenex. We need an economic stimulus and an economic recovery package, and we are fooling around on motions to proceed and clotures and backward and forward, and so on. The American people wonder what are we doing. They believe that when all is said and done, more gets said than does get done. And guess what. Put me in the column with the American people.

I am very frustrated with this institution. The rules were designed to make sure the minority party could always be able to express their view. That should happen. But it was not to bottle up progress. It was not to stifle the opportunity to get our economy back on track. It was not to tie up the Senate so we could not help 250,000 vets, 20 million senior citizens, and actually get money in the pocketbooks of people so we can start getting our economy back on the track.

Everyone agrees we need to jumpstart our economy, everyone agrees we need to do it now—everybody but the other side of the aisle who is sitting on their hands and sitting on parliamentary procedure and sitting on you know what. I think it is time they get up, and I call out to the people: Flood our phones, get them off this, and get this economy going.

We know we are being very hard hit. Last month, we lost 17,000 jobs in the

service sector. That was supposed to be job-loss proof. Families all over the country are losing their homes to the subprime crisis. The price of food, gas, and health care is going up.

We voted last night on a parliamentary procedure that would have moved this legislation on the economic stimulus forward. It lost. It lost by one vote. But did it lose on a majority? No. Under the rules of the Senate, we need 60 votes to win a majority or we need 67 votes to win a majority. I thought a majority used to be a majority. Now we find that one vote—one vote—is standing in the way of moving the economic stimulus package.

I say to America: You watch cable TV, you listen to the chattering class, you read the newspapers. You know where that one vote lies. You see those empty chairs over there? One vote lies there. Flood our phones with calls, flood our Internet, flood our fax machines so we can get moving.

Last night what we had was a plan to move the economy forward. It was a well-thought-out plan of tax rebates to help families. We included not only that but 250,000 disabled veterans and 20 million seniors. At the same time, we extended unemployment insurance for an extra 13 weeks because for people who lost their job, it is now taking a longer time to find another job. And we help small business.

Last night, we Democrats voted to stand up for those disabled vets, for those senior citizens, for those people who have lost their jobs to make sure they will have the opportunity to benefit from the stimulus, and as they benefit from the stimulus, because they have such modest incomes, the money they get will go right into the economy. It will not go into paying the bar bill for somebody who has a fifth home in the Hamptons. It will go into the economy.

This bill helps 250,000 disabled vets. They say they did not qualify; they did not have earned income. My God, my God. I have a veterans advisory board. I meet with the disabled vets. Some of them belong to the Purple Heart Association, some come in wheelchairs, some come with canes because they bear the permanent wounds of war.

We always say a grateful nation never forgets, but we forgot them in the stimulus package. We forgot 250,000 of them. If a grateful nation never forgets, let's say we think you earned that. We think you earned that at Iwo Jima. We think you earned it at Normandy and Porkchop Hill and the Mekong Delta. If you have worn the uniform, you have earned it.

Now we want to help 20 million seniors who are left out because they said those Social Security benefits are not earned income. You pay your Social Security based on your wages. I think that is earned income. Every day there are people out there working, or who have worked every day. They have spent their whole lives building our economy, building our Nation, and

they are ready to do it again. All they need right now is to qualify for what they should be entitled to.

People say: Well, there she goes again. You know, BARB has a master's degree in social work. Well, you bet I do. And that social work took me into the neighborhoods and families of our constituents, and as a Senator I often try to think that way. While everybody here likes to talk about the macroeconomics and they take codels to Davos to hang out with the rich and famous, who want to be even more rich and more famous, I worry about the macaroni and cheese issues. And the macaroni and cheese issues that we have to focus on are what is happening in our economy.

But I just don't want to be a bleeding heart—though I am happy to be a bleeding heart. I am happy to be a bleeding heart, but I know that something called Moody's Economy.com—Moody's Economy.com—tells us where we get the most stimulus from the techniques used to do the stimulus, and what do they tell us? They tell us to give it to the people who need it the most—to extend unemployment benefits and to extend other benefits, such as LIHEAP, which helps people with their energy costs.

Now, 41 Republicans blocked this bill. They called it a Christmas tree. They said it was loaded with pet projects. Well, yes, disabled vets are a pet project with me. I stand guilty. Disabled veterans are a pet project with me. Clean up the mess at Walter Reed, clean up the compensation system, and include them in the stimulus package. You bet. But I also resent that. Disabled veterans are not ornaments or decorations, they are heroes, and they are the backbone of our country. So one vote stands between the American people and some help during these tough times.

I thank the eight Republicans who voted with us last night to move the bill forward so we could vote up or down on amendments. We need one more Senator to join us, one more Senator who will stand up for the people, for families, for seniors, for wounded warriors, one more vote against politics as usual. I say over there to those empty chairs: Will one of you come forward and join this very important effort?

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. GREGG. I wanted to rise briefly to express my concerns at the process as it presently stands here in the Senate. I am tempted to say: Wherefore art thou the stimulus package, because there is no reason there should not be action on it now.