

I agree with Senator VITTER that cost-of-living adjustments for Members of Congress should not be automatic. That is why I introduced a freestanding bill last week that would do just that.

In addition, in the same time on the floor, Senator REID said:

If there are people who don't want to agree to this tonight, assuming the Senator from Louisiana is that person, I will bring it up some other time. I am committed to doing this.

Again:

I will bring it up some other time. I am committed to doing this.

I objected to bringing that freestanding bill up then because it clearly would have drained votes in support of my amendment away from my amendment and helped defeat it. In fact, we saw how close that vote was. But now that that vote is over, I applaud Senator REID for his offer:

I will bring it up some other time. I am committed to doing this.

I am here to say that this time, right now, these next 2 weeks, is a perfect "some other time." We are clearly in a bit of a lull in terms of floor activity, this week and next week, before we begin an important debate on the budget. The majority leader is looking for things to take up our floor time. We are clearly in a light period. So what better "some other time" than right here, right now? In that spirit, and in the spirit of cooperation to move forward, I sent the majority leader a letter last Thursday and I expressed these thoughts and I asked him to bring up his freestanding bill, or mine, or any freestanding bill to end pay raises for Members of Congress being on autopilot on the Senate floor as soon as possible. As I pointed out, this clearly has support to move this through the process, through the Senate in the near future.

It does not have unanimous support. Any issue such as this never would have unanimous support. But it has the support of over 60 Members of this body.

Why do I say that? It is simple math. On the vote on my amendment I obtained 45 "yes" votes. In addition to those 45 votes, there were 20 Members, including the distinguished majority leader, who voted against my amendment, saying that the only reason they were doing that was to not burden the omnibus spending bill with the amendment. They said on the record, they are for the concept and Senator REID introduced a freestanding bill in this body and he has coauthors to that freestanding bill in that number—20. It is simple math. If you add 45 and 20 you come up with 65, well over a filibuster-proof number, well over the 60 votes required to not only move this bill through the Senate but move it through in a fairly expedited, efficient, quick process.

The perfect time is now. We are clearly in 2 weeks of relative lull before the debate on the budget. The majority leader clearly is looking for im-

portant business to bring to the floor, particularly since cram-down and other issues are not being brought to the floor this week as planned. What better time to come together in a bipartisan way, to rebuild the confidence of the American people and to get this done, passing it through the Senate. Again:

I will bring it up some other time. I am committed to doing this.

The distinguished majority leader.

Again I ask the majority leader in a spirit of bipartisanship, of cooperation, of reestablishing the confidence of the American people in Congress by doing away with this offensive practice—pay raises on autopilot without debate, without legislation, without a vote, without even a line item in an appropriations bill which we can try to change through amendment—let's change that wrong and offensive practice.

I urge the distinguished majority leader to look at my letter of last Thursday, to consider it carefully, to understand that we have established through his bill, through my vote, 65 votes in support of doing away with this on the Senate floor. So let's act. With 65 votes we can act, we can be successful, and we can do it in a very efficient manner. What better time to do it than right now?

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BEGICH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. BOXER. What is the order, please?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 7 minutes remaining in morning business.

AIG BONUSES AND THE BUDGET

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I rise to talk about a couple issues. The first is to add my voice to the outrage over the bonuses to people who to say don't deserve it is an understatement. I used to work on Wall Street a very long time ago. You got a bonus when you did something good, when you brought business in, when you did well for the company, not when you brought the company down. It is disgusting, disgraceful. We are hearing outrage from all quarters of society, which means we are going to do something about it. I wanted to make sure I am on the record as saying the bonuses ought to be returned voluntarily and, if not, they ought to be taxed as close to 100 percent as we can get. I will be supporting that.

It is time to change the culture in corporate America. If you are going to turn to taxpayers for help, then don't squander their money. Work to pay it

back as fast as you can and get back on your own. It is such an obvious point. I wish to praise the President for being clear on this point.

I also came to talk about the upcoming debate we will be having on the budget. I was a long-time member of the Budget Committee and then moved off to take other assignments. But I have always respected the work of that committee because the budget is truly a roadmap to the priorities of a nation. When we look at a budget, surely there will be certain items in it we may not want to agree with. We may want to trim it here and there. I don't agree with everything in the Obama budget. There are a few I will work to change. In general, at this time when we are suffering so economically, the priorities laid out are good for America and good for the State of California. I wish to talk about a couple of these priorities.

We know the Obama administration inherited an economic nightmare from George Bush's administration: 4.4 million jobs lost in the last 14 months; an unemployment rate that is soaring—in my State it is in double digits—12.5 million Americans unemployed, and a Federal debt that is going upward very quickly.

What is so interesting to me is that when Bill Clinton handed over the keys to the White House to George W. Bush, our budget was actually in a surplus. We actually had discussions in my household about the fact that the debt is going down so fast, we may not have the opportunity to buy any more Treasury bonds. Let's not forget what happened in 8 years. A budget surplus turned into outrageous deficits. The economy took a terrible turn for the worse. The debt began to soar.

Now we have a new President who ran on a platform of change. As I watch my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, save a few, they are fighting for the status quo. My belief is, if you fight for the status quo, that is not a passive act. It is a hostile act. Because the status quo has to change so we can relieve some of the pain in America. What President Obama does with this budget, very wisely, is to continue the economic stimulus he started with his economic stimulus bill.

He focuses on three priorities: education, health care, and clean energy. Everyone knows—and I know my friend in the chair has a young son—what President Obama said is true. Countries that outteach us today will outcompete us tomorrow. His young son and my grandchildren, if they don't get the education they deserve, will not have a chance to get that dream we had the opportunity to get in our generation. For every dollar invested in education, there is a \$4 to \$9 return in higher earnings, higher employment rates, less crime, less welfare, and in better health. The Obama plan will double the number of children served by Early Head Start and will expand Head Start. He will provide resources

to reward effective teachers and effective principals. He will increase the capacity of our young people to go to college on Pell grants. When we have a President who invests in education, we know we should support him because every dollar we invest comes back ninefold.

Then the President invests in health care. We know the biggest cause of bankruptcy in America is when a family is hit with a catastrophic health problem and they are uninsured or their insurance is capped. We know premiums have grown four times faster than wages in the last 8 years. Our President is going to finally take on the issue of health care. We should stand with him. Does that mean we will support every little thing he recommends? It may not. We may agree on 90 percent. But we will move on health care because not to do so, again, is a hostile act because the current situation is unsustainable. The cost to families today is unsustainable. The fear families have—what if somebody gets a catastrophic illness, what will happen—is unforgivable.

Lastly, we see our President investing in clean energy. What he is doing is looking at the future and recognizing that the old energy is not going to sustain us. If we want to lead the world, we have to do what Thomas Friedman suggests in his book “Hot, Flat, and Crowded”—step out and invent the new clean energy technologies. In doing that, we will lead the world in green jobs. We will lead the world in exports. If we adopt the cap-and-trade plan that is recommended by our President, we will see a robust economy because, once you put a price on carbon, all the other alternatives come up behind it, and it will lead us out of this economic morass.

I believed it important to come to the Chamber today to speak to these two issues. We cannot abide by the outrageous bonuses in a company led by people who took the company down. We can't abide by that. In addition, we need to work with our new President and bring about the change he promised in his campaign. That change is reflected in his budget.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

REVOLUTIONARY WAR AND WAR OF 1812 BATTLEFIELD PROTECTION ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 146, which the clerk will report by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A motion to proceed to the bill (H.R. 146) to amend the American Battlefield Protection Act of 1996 to establish a battlefield ac-

quisition grant program for the acquisition and protection of nationally significant battlefields and associated sites of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

THE BUDGET AND RECONCILIATION

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I listened this morning to President Obama as he spoke on the budget. In attendance with him were the chairmen of the Budget Committees in the Senate and the House, Chairman CONRAD and Chairman SPRATT. Essentially, the President was defending his budget, as proposed and sent up here to the Hill.

His theme was we should not pass on problems to the next generation. Thus, he said, his budget took on the issue of energy and took on the issue of health care as being core questions that need to be resolved now and not be passed on to the next generation. I could not agree with him more—first, that we should not pass on problems to the next generation, and, secondly, we should take on the problems we have today. And they are fairly big.

Where I disagree with him is the conclusion that the budget he sent up here does not pass problems on to the next generation. In fact, it passes the most significant problem on to the next generation, which is that it so greatly expands the size of Government in such a short period of time with so much borrowing that it basically will bankrupt our children and our children's children as a result of the cost of Government going forward.

People do not have to believe me to recognize this. All they have to do is look at the President's budget. In 5 years, the President's budget will double the national debt. In 10 years, the President's budget will triple the national debt. To try to put this in perspective, if you take all the debt the U.S. Government has run up since the beginning of our country—from George Washington all the way through to George W. Bush, that total amount of debt—in 5 years it will be doubled under this budget, as sent up by President Obama.

Now, a lot of that debt that is being run up in the short run I am not going to claim is inappropriate in the sense that it is something that is under his control or that he is responsible for as President. In fact, I agree that we as a nation need to expand our spending as a government in the short run in order to try to address this recessionary period, and specifically to try to stabilize our financial situation, our financial system. I do not happen to agree with the stimulus package which was passed. I do not agree with the omnibus package which was passed. They were both profligate and unfocused, money being spent inappropriately and inefficiently. But I am willing to accept the fact in the short run there has to be a spike in our national debt in order to address this recession.

What is not tolerable, however, is that under this budget, after the short

run—after this period from 2008, 2009, say, through 2011, when the recession, by all estimates, will hopefully be over—we will still be running the debt up radically, as sent up by this President. In fact, it doubles in 5 years, but it triples in 10 years, which means there is—I am not aware that a recession in the last 5 years of this budget is being proposed; I certainly hope it is not being proposed, but certainly there is nothing that requires that type of a radical expansion in our debt over that period.

The practical implications of this doubling of the debt are that by the time the budget gets into the year 2013, the public debt of this country will be, as a ratio of GDP, 67 percent of GDP. I suspect when CBO scores the President's numbers at the end of this week it will probably be close to 70 percent of GDP. What does that mean? Well, try to put this in perspective.

Prior to the recession, our public debt—that is the debt held by people such as the Chinese, for example, and the Europeans—our public debt—the debt which we sell to the world in order to finance our Government—was about 40 percent of our gross national product. That is an acceptable level. Most economists will say we can tolerate a debt to gross national product ratio of 40 percent. But when it gets up to around 70 percent, when it gets over 60 percent—when it gets into those numbers—it is not tolerable. You might be able to tolerate it for a little while, for a few years, but you cannot tolerate it for an extended period of time. What the President is proposing is that 67 percent of public debt to GDP ratio—which will be over 70 percent, I suspect, when it is rescored that goes on forever.

In addition, the deficit, beginning in the year 2012, under the President's budget, will be at 3 percent to 4 percent of gross national product. Now, historically, over the last 20 years—prior to the recession—the deficit has been around 2 percent of gross national product. Why is it important to keep that down? Because every time you run a deficit, you add to the public debt. When you get into the 3- to 4-percent range of annual deficits as a percentage of GDP, you are essentially adding so much debt so quickly every year that basically your Government becomes unaffordable. That is the bottom line here.

What happens, as you go into the outyears when you triple the debt and keep the deficit at around 3 percent or 4 percent of GDP the currency starts to be under pressure. The dollar becomes questioned as to its value. People start asking, especially in the international community: Do we dare buy American debt? In fact, you heard, regrettably, the Chinese Premier raise that issue already. If you cannot sell the debt and you cannot finance the Government, you do not have too many choices. You must move to inflation. That is not a good choice for Americans.