

It could be that some of these people would actually be turned loose.

It is very serious. It is something we need to keep. Every publication, every newspaper or television station that has gone to Guantanamo Bay has come back and said all these things just are not true, we need to keep Gitmo, and it has changed a lot of minds. I am hoping that is one area where we will be able to demonstrate clearly that it is a resource we must have and the world needs very much. We will be working to that cause.

Another issue that is not talked about very much in the budget is that almost everything is increased. We look at the size of the budget. We look at the deficits. The deficit for the year we are in right now could approach \$2 trillion. It is just unimaginable. People criticized George W. Bush during his tenure, but if you take all the deficits for those 8 years, add them up, and divide by eight, it averaged \$245 billion a year. Now we are talking about eight times that in 1 year. These amounts are horrible.

The other aspect of the budget I don't like is everything is going up, an increase in spending, except military. We have a serious problem right now that we are facing in the military; that is, during the decade of the nineties, we downgraded our military by about 40 percent. I might add that some countries that could be potential adversaries, such as China, increased tenfold during that time. We reduced. There was this euphoric attitude that the Cold War is over, we don't need a military anymore. So in the nineties, they brought down the military in terms of our force strength, in terms of our modernization program.

There were a few heroes back at that time who helped us out. One was a GEN John Jumper, before he became the Chief of the Air Force. He made a statement in 1998. He said: Now we are in a position where our best strike fighters, our best strike equipment, the F-15 and F-16, are not as good in many ways as what the Russians are making right now in the SU series. At that time, it was SU-30s, now SU-35s. We went ahead. That helped us get into the F-22 and the Joint Strike Fighter so we would again regain our superiority.

When I talk with people and tell them that when our kids go out in potential conflicts, they would be fighting people who have better equipment than we do, it is un-American, it is not believable. Right now, the best artillery piece we have is called a Paladin. It is World War II technology. You have to get out and swab the breech after every shot. Yet there are five countries, including South Africa, that make a better one than we have.

Because we lifted that awareness, we were able to step into an area of what we call Future Combat Systems, FCS, to modernize our ground equipment and other equipment they will use. There are 16 elements of the Future

Combat Systems. The first is NLOS-C, non-line-of-site cannon. This would replace the Paladin, so we will have something that is state of the art. But we are not there and will not be there for several more years.

We went through the decade of the nineties downgrading our military, and then, of course, when 9/11 came, all of a sudden we were in a war. I have to be sympathetic with former President George W. Bush because he inherited a military that had been taken down, and then all of a sudden he is confronted with one or two wars or fronts he had to fight. So it has been very difficult.

It is interesting to me that many of the liberal Members of the Senate during the years we were trying to enhance our military spending are the ones who objected to that and then complained about the overworking of our Guard and Reserve. They actually are responsible for that. Yes, we are now trying to do something about it. But in this budget, we increase spending everywhere except the military. That is an area where we are going to have to be doing something.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. INHOFE. I encourage us to look at the overall budget, not just the tax increases but also how it affects other programs, such as our military.

I thank the Chair and 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.

Ms. STABENOW. 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.

THE BUDGET

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I left a wonderful meeting with a group of organizations—many of our national faith leaders—from around the country and those who have been deeply involved in the issues around the Federal budget and expenditures and what our priorities should be as a country. There was a new optimism in the room about the direction of the country because for the first time in a long time—certainly since 2001—we have actually been talking about how does a budget reflect what is right for the majority of the American people; how do we address what is happening for children and families; middle-class workers who have lost their jobs and are trying just to put food on the table; people who have been struggling and not doing well even before the recession; the poor who find themselves hit over and over again and need to know there is a ladder out of poverty and into the middle class.

It was wonderful to see the commitment in that room and to see the fact

that people around the country are coming together to focus on how we strengthen our country in very real ways. Not what has happened in the last 8 years—where it has been all about tax policies to help the privileged few, spending to help the privileged few—but how do we have a country where everybody has a chance to achieve the American dream for themselves and their families.

We talked about the fact that the budget we will be taking up next week, the week after, and every year is a moral document. It is about who we are as Americans: What do we believe in? What do we care about? I am very proud President Obama has given us a moral document that reflects the values and the priorities of the American people; the fact that he has focused on education, health care, getting us off our dependence on foreign oil so we can bring down the costs of energy and create jobs through the new green economy, and that we are turning the corner as we look at a tax policy to focus on the middle class and to focus on families who are working hard every day or trying to find a job. So these were all positive things.

But I also thought in that meeting this morning—when we were talking about the budget as a moral document—how there has been created in this country a culture of greed. Greed has been rewarded for too long at the expense of the majority of Americans—certainly at the expense of the people in my great State of Michigan. Nowhere is that more epitomized than looking at recent outrages, whether it be Bernie Madoff and what happened with all the people who were victimized and who lost their savings and all the people who have been impacted—wiped out—by a Ponzi scheme and the greed of one individual or a few individuals or turning closer to home and what we have been talking about for the last couple days, which is the outrageous bonuses—\$165 million in bonuses—to a group of people at AIG who actually created the situation we are in today—not only for this country but which has created a ripple effect that has caused a global credit crisis. We look at the morality of that—the morality of \$165 million in bonuses.

I am also outraged at the fact that we have put so much money into this company. Taxpayers now own 80 percent of it. Yet we have not seen the oversight, the accountability one would expect, whether it is the bonuses or anything else for that matter. Now, we all know President Obama inherited an incredible mess and is working with all of us to dig our way out, but we have to have accountability with AIG and every other entity that has stepped up to ask for or received taxpayer dollars. Bonuses? They are absolutely an outrage, especially for people who didn't deserve a bonus for their performance. In fact, many left, and should leave, because of what has been done. They should be fired, if they

haven't already left—the people who got us where we are today.

I am amazed when I look at the fact that we are providing such a different standard between those on Wall Street, who got us into this mess—AIG and others receiving taxpayer money—and what I see happening with my own auto industry in Michigan, employing directly or indirectly 3 million people. Where is the equivalent of the auto task force? I can tell you that every single line in every single budget, every single management plan, every part of the auto companies that has received a small fraction of what AIG has received has been gone through and is continuing to receive great scrutiny. I support that. They certainly are willing to do that. But where is the scrutiny on AIG? Where is the scrutiny on the other companies that have taken huge amounts of money from taxpayers?

I find it incredible when they say they can't renegotiate contracts. Somebody should tell that to the United Auto Workers, who are renegotiating contracts right now, who have opened their contracts over and over again, with workers taking more and more cuts, paying more and more in health care. Yet we hear from this company and these executives with AIG that they have contractual agreements and they can't reopen contracts? I don't think there is anybody in my State who believes that is not possible, given what our families have gone through over and over again, with people who thought they had jobs, thought they had contracts but suddenly do not.

Why is it the people who got us into this mess—with their complicated leveraging, the tools they put together that created this house of cards that has fallen and affected not only everyone in America but around the world—can't be asked to step up and reopen contracts? I don't understand that at all.

We are going to do everything we can in order to get that money back for the American taxpayers. We have seen bills introduced, and I am proud to be co-sponsoring one of those bills through the Finance Committee. Our leader, Senator REID, has asked us to move as quickly as possible, and I know the Speaker of the House has as well, as has the President of the United States, and we are going to do everything we can to be able to recoup those dollars.

When we talk about what is moral in this country, whether it is the budget, whether it is bonuses of millions of dollars for people who have hurt so many, caused so much damage, created such a crisis around the world or whether it is looking at what is happening to families every day, this is a moral issue. This is a question of right and wrong. It is a question of our priorities. The budget the President has proposed focuses us back on what is important for this country, and it is critical we get that budget passed. We have middle-

class families across the country right now, and really all families, who never thought they would have to worry about trying to decide whether to buy groceries or to buy medicine; worrying about what happens tomorrow—will there be food tomorrow. People are going to food banks who never thought they would have to go to a food bank. People who used to donate to the food bank are now going to the food bank, and others who have been relying on the food banks for a long time find it is getting tougher and tougher and tougher.

More than 11 percent—in fact, close to 12 percent—of the people in my State do not have jobs right now. They are unemployed. That is only the official number. That doesn't count those who have been long-term unemployed, unable to find work and are no longer counted. It also doesn't count the number of people who are working one, two, and three part-time jobs trying to hold it together. That is a moral issue.

The reason we tackled this recovery plan and so quickly brought it forward—to create jobs that we create in America, jobs in a green economy, focusing on job training and education and health care for people who have not been able to find a job so they will be able to keep health care going for their families—is because we understand what this is all about in terms of our values and priorities. Millions of families are in danger of losing their homes or have already lost their homes which is why we are focused on doing everything we can to help families, neighborhoods, and communities address the housing crisis. We know that education is the key to the future for all of us, for our children and our grandchildren. Keeping education a priority and investing in the future, in education and access to college, is a critical part of our budget because it is a critical part of the American dream.

Yes, I am outraged about AIG giving away millions in bonuses—absolutely. I am outraged about other injustices going on, about the focus over the last 8 years on those who are doing well and policies that made sure they were doing even better, oftentimes at the expense of middle-class Americans, at the expense of the majority of Americans in this country. I am outraged that billions of dollars are going to companies that do not have accountability attached to them. I know the people in Michigan are as well. But I also believe it is critical that we not only get the money back from these bonuses and provide the accountability but we redirect back to the priorities of the American people. That is what this budget is all about.

We need jobs. We need jobs in this country because, if people have money in their pockets and they can pay their bills and keep that mortgage and invest in their families' education, this country is going to turn around.

The budget the President has proposed, the budget the people with

whom I met this morning are so encouraged about, is, in fact, a moral document. It changes the way this country has been operating—from a culture of greed, where somehow bonuses for AIG made sense to somebody somewhere in AIG, to a situation where we are focused again on what is important for the majority of the American people, what will allow us to be strong as a country: putting people back to work; making sure we have access to health care, which is not only the moral thing to do but brings down costs; education and investing in a new energy economy that is not dependent on anybody else but American ingenuity. That is what is in this budget, and it is a budget that reflects the priorities and the values of the American people. We need to come together in a bipartisan way to pass this as quickly as possible.

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

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF RONALD KIRK TO BE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Ronald Kirk, of Texas, to be U.S. Trade Representative.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 90 minutes of debate on the nomination, with the majority controlling 30 minutes and the Republicans controlling 60 minutes.

The Senator from Arizona is recognized.

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, as you noted, we will consider the nomination of Mr. Ron Kirk as the next U.S. Trade Representative.

With some reluctance, I will vote to confirm Mr. Kirk's nomination. I think it is pretty obvious Mr. Kirk has been less than forthcoming on a number of trade issues that affect this country, and some of the positions he has articulated are very dangerous for this Nation's future. I have come to this floor on numerous occasions and argued against the provisions that have