

any time for people to study what is buried in the details.

This bill is a legislative slap in the face to all the voters who rejected these things.

For the first time in the modern era—for the first time in the modern era—Congress hasn't passed a single appropriations bill—not one, not one single appropriations bill. Democrats have been too focused on their own leftwing wish list to take care of the very basic work of government.

Now, at the end of the session, they want to roll all of these bills together, along with anything else they haven't gotten over the past 2 years, and rush it past the American people just the way they jammed the health care bill through Congress last Christmas. We all remember being here every single day throughout the month of December last year for a 2,700-page health care bill passed on Christmas Eve. This is eerily reminiscent of the experience last December, and I predict the American people have the same reaction to this bill as they did to the health care bill a year ago.

A more appropriate approach is available to us. We could pass a sensible, short-term continuing resolution that gets us into next year when the new Congress will have the opportunity to make a determination on how best to spend the taxpayers' money. The government runs out of money, by the way, this Saturday. Congress should pass a short-term CR immediately. We need to pass this tax legislation we voted on earlier this week. And we should accomplish the most basic function of government. We can at least vote to keep the lights on around here. I mean, the deadline for funding the basics of government was last October, and here we are on December 15 proposing treaties—treaties. We ought to pass the tax legislation and keep the lights on. Everything else can wait.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period of morning business until 11 a.m. with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Florida.

TAX CUTS AND UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, we are soon going to vote on the bipartisan compromise on extending the expiring tax cuts and unemployment benefits. Although, as I described yesterday, it is a bitter pill to swallow because of the extended funding that

will cause the deficit to rise, I doubt there is anybody in this Chamber who wants the alternative; that is, inaction or a political stalemate which is certainly not an option.

Job growth remains anemic. For many of our constituents who are struggling to make ends meet in the midst of this jobless economic recovery, unemployment benefits have already expired. Without action, on January 1, those fortunate enough to have a job would see a significant drop in their paychecks as the middle-class tax cuts enacted 10 years ago also expire, with the effect that the taxes would be going up all across the income spectrum.

So out of this stark reality facing us on January 1, this is when people of good will have come together—people of good will who have different opinions, and who, as I said, have to swallow hard on some of the parts of this package. It is my intention, as we vote in just a few hours, to vote for this package. It does provide relief that is critical for middle-class families.

For example, for a family making \$63,000 a year, if we didn't pass this bill, and the existing tax law expired, then that income level, a family earning \$63,000—their taxes would go up by \$2,000. This bill prevents that. These middle-class tax cuts are extended in this legislation for a period of 2 years, and that includes the 10-percent income tax bracket, the \$1,000 child tax credit, an increase in the standard deduction for married couples, and an expansion of the 15-percent tax bracket for married couples. The bill rewards work by continuing provisions in the 2009 Recovery Act that expanded the earned-income tax credit and the refundable tax credit.

The bill also continues the tax credit that allows taxpayers to claim a \$2,500 tax credit for all 4 years of their higher education. In my State of Florida, 600,000 Florida taxpayers benefited from that tax credit.

It also has significant consequences for everybody across the board. For example, without an extension of the unemployment benefits through this coming year, 7 million unemployed workers would lose one of the last lifelines available to them. This bill is going to breathe life into the private sector through a payroll tax reduction of 2 percent for 1 year. What that does is put more money into people's pockets, which they will then go out and spend. That spending will turn over in the economy and that will produce jobs.

The bill includes provisions of particular importance to my State. Our State is one of six that does not have an income tax. As you know, when you calculate your Federal income tax, you can deduct your State income tax. For those six States, we finally got a provision in 6 years ago—whereas we don't have an income tax in Florida, we have a State sales tax. We put that in, and that is a deductible item, comparable to other States that have an income

tax—to deduct that in the calculation of the Federal income tax. I am pleased that this agreement extends that deduction.

The bill also has an extension of section 1603, which is the Treasury grant program for renewable energy projects, to convert tax credits for the production of renewable electricity into an upfront investment tax credit, and to receive a grant in lieu of the investment tax credit. Certainly, as we are trying to move to renewable energy, that keeps that alive. It is badly needed. But what it illustrates is that there were some 20 to 25 Senators out here on the floor yesterday who were talking about our commitment to roll up our sleeves going into the next year, to try to do something about the reduction of spending and, therefore, reduction of the deficit, at the same time reforming a Tax Code that has gotten so complicated and so fraught with special interest provisions that it is crying out for reform. One way or another, we are going to have to make it happen. I believe that what we are going to vote on this afternoon is the first step of a badly needed effort toward restoring trust and confidence and starting to get our economy moving again.

I yield the floor.

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

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, our plan on our side was for me to have 15 minutes. I ask unanimous consent that I may share some of that time with Senator CHAMBLISS.

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

TAX EXTENDERS

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, as we look at the bill we are going to be voting on today, it is an interesting perspective if you are outside of America looking at it. Here is what people are saying. You are going to stimulate the economy with a 2-percent reduction in payroll taxes. You are not going to raise income tax rates. Then you are going to spend another \$136 billion. But for all this you are going to borrow the money.

We spent 8 months on a deficit commission addressing the very real problems that are about to become acute for our country. I have no disregard for those who bring this bill to the floor. But to bring this bill to the floor without the opportunity to cut wasteful Washington spending to at least pay for the outflows that are going to come as a result of this bill, which will be the \$136.4 billion I mentioned—without an opportunity to at least make an effort for the American people to see we understand that part of the waste and duplication and low priority items that the Federal Government is presently

enabling to happen—to not offer and have the opportunity to offer a way to not charge that to our children and grandchildren denies the reality of everybody else in the world that is looking at our country.

This afternoon, or later this morning, I will be offering an amendment that will suspend the rule, including any requirements for germaneness, and we will have a vote. We are going to have an amendment that cuts \$156 billion from the Federal Government to pay for the \$136 billion that is actually going to go out the door in the next 11 or 12 months. It is not an easy vote. But the world is going to be looking to see if we get it.

Not only are the people in this country disgusted with our actions, that we continue to borrow and steal and beg from future generations, but the world financial markets are going to see this. You saw the reaction of Erskine Bowles and Alan Simpson, who worked for 8 months trying to drive an issue to get us back on course and create a future for us that will allow us to control our destiny rather than someone else doing it.

This is just a drop in the bucket—this amendment—to the waste, duplication, and the fraud. We are going to run trillion dollar deficits as far as the eye can see right now, with no grownups in the room to say we are going to quit doing that. We are going to continue to do that.

What are some of the things in this amendment? A congressional pay freeze; a cut in the executive branch and congressional budget of 15 percent; a freeze on the salaries and the size of the Federal Government; limiting what the government can spend on planning, travel, and new vehicles; selling unneeded and excess Federal property; stopping unemployment benefits to people who are millionaires—by the way, we are sending unemployment benefits to people who are unemployed and have assets in excess of \$1 million; collecting unpaid taxes currently in excess of \$4 billion owed by Federal employees and Members of Congress; force consolidation of duplicative programs; preventing fraud, taking some of the \$100 billion that is defrauded from Medicare and Medicaid every year, and preventing that from happening by the FAST Act; streamlining defense spending and reducing foreign aid, including voluntary excess contributions to the United Nations.

The people of the world are astounded that we would spend another \$136 billion and make no attempt to get rid of the excesses, waste, and duplication in our Federal Government. Because we are not allowed under the regular order to offer amendments—and I understand the purpose for that—this amendment will require 67 votes.

The American people are going to be looking, and they are going to say: Does the Senate get it? Do they understand the severity and the urgency of the problems that face our fiscal future?

When the Joint Chiefs of Staff of our entire military say that the greatest problem facing America is not our military challenges but our debt, it should give us all pause to consider the reality and impact of our excess.

I yield for Senator CHAMBLISS.

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

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I rise to support the amendment offered by my good friend from Oklahoma. America is today at a crossroads—a crossroads where we have the opportunity as policymakers to go in the direction that the people of America said we should go in on November 2 or to have the opportunity to go down the road of continuing to spend money by this body and the body across the Capitol, without paying for the money we are spending.

These amendments are pretty simple and straightforward. What they say is that we as policymakers have an obligation to listen to the people who sent us here, listen to the people who said, by golly, we don't like the way you are running the financial resources that we send to Washington. And here we are, the minority leader, Senator MCCONNELL just sat down from saying and talking about an omnibus bill that goes in the wrong direction—a direction that is totally opposite of what the people of America said they wanted on November 2.

Now we are going to have a vote today on the tax package that, in my opinion, is a good package. Only in Washington is a package which says that if you continue to tax people at the rate they are being taxed today, it adds to the deficit. There is another part to that. There are additions to that tax package that do provide for additional spending—spending that can be paid for, without any feeling on the part of the offsets, or the people who are going to be affected by the offsets, as Senator COBURN has proposed.

These amendments make common sense, they make business sense, and they certainly make the kind of sense that the people in America want us to start reacting to and providing for.

Mr. President, America's finances are on an unsustainable path, and we cannot ignore this fact by continuing to pass legislation that we have not paid for.

The amendments offered by my colleague from Oklahoma, Senator COBURN, are an opportunity for this body to act responsibly so that America's future prosperity is not stifled by insurmountable debt.

All of us in this Chamber believe some portion of this bill should be paid for. Here is a chance to show we mean just that. These amendments provide billions of dollars of savings by eliminating wasteful spending, and by consolidating duplicative programs.

Moreover, these proposals are bipartisan, having been recommended by the President's Commission on Fiscal Re-

sponsibility and Reform. In addition, the amendments include ideas put forth by Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama to terminate certain Federal programs.

We are all aware of the tepid, seemingly unstable economic recovery from the financial crisis of the past few years. Raising taxes in the face of high unemployment and volatile economic times would injure what slow growth our economy has, in fact, achieved.

However, despite almost unanimous support for extending the emergency unemployment insurance benefits, they are still unpaid for in this legislation.

If we cannot figure out a way to pay for something that nearly everyone in this body supports, how will we ever truly address our current spending and debt levels? When will we turn and face the unavoidable hard choices?

There is no better time than now. These amendments provide \$46 billion in savings this year, and \$156 billion 5 years.

Much of the savings can be accomplished by cleaning up our own house. Specifically, this amendment proposes a congressional pay freeze and a 15-percent reduction in Congress's budget; a freeze on how much can be spent on the salaries for Federal employees and a reduction in the number of government bureaucrats; limiting the amount that the government can spend on printing, travel and new vehicles; selling unneeded and excess Federal property.

In the interests of strengthening America's financial future, we have to make the tough choices. These amendments do just that.

We must show the American people that we have the good faith, the courage, and the will to confront the challenges before us by working toward sound fiscal decisionmaking, by managing our debts and paying our bills just as millions of American families have to do month after month.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I will close with the following comment. The Gallup organization came out today with the latest approval rating on Congress. Do you know what it is? It is 13 percent. Thirteen percent of the people in this country have confidence in what we are doing and 87 percent do not.

I side with the 87 percent. I think they have it right. If we continue with the omnibus package, and we continue to have our earmarks, and we continue to pass expenditures by not reducing expenditures elsewhere, it is going to sink even lower.

What does that really mean, that only 13 percent of the people in this country have confidence in us? What it really means is that the legitimacy of our positions and our power is in question. Everybody recognizes the problems in front of us. The question is, Will you make the hard choices and do the tough part to get us out of the problems we have? We can no longer borrow money we don't have to spend on things we don't need.

With that, I yield the floor and welcome the comments of the Senator from Indiana.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Indiana.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. BAYH. Mr. President, if I could be permitted a few moments of personal privilege before I begin my formal remarks, there are so many people I need to express my heartfelt gratitude to today, starting with, of course, my wonderful wife Susan. I know we are not supposed to recognize people in the gallery, but I am going to break the rules for one of the first times here to thank my wife. We have been married for 25 wonderful years, and frankly, Mr. President, I wouldn't have been elected dog catcher without Susan's love and support.

I often remember a story during my first campaign where I met an elderly woman who took my hand, looked up into my eyes, and said: Young man, I am going to vote for you.

I was curious and asked her why.

She said, with a twinkle in her eye: Well, I have met your wife. It seems to me you did all right with the most important decision you will ever make. I will trust you with all the other ones too.

It is not uncommon in our State, as Senator LUGAR could attest, that people say they really vote for Susan's husband.

Darling, I can't thank you enough.

She was a wonderful first lady, is a phenomenal mother, and is the partner for my life.

Next, I would like to express my gratitude to my parents. Even though they were very busy, I never doubted for a moment that I was the most important thing in their lives. There is no question that my devotion to public service stems from their commitment—something, Mr. President, I think you can relate to as well. I have always admired my father's selfless commitment to helping our State and Nation. I am proud to follow in his footsteps here in the Senate and to share his name. My mother taught me that even from the depths of adversity can come hope. She was diagnosed with cancer at age 38, passed from us at age 46—an age I now recognize to be much, much too young. I miss her, but I suspect, as so often in my life, she is watching from on high today.

Next, to my wonderful sons, Nick and Beau. They came into our lives when I was still Governor and were barely 3 when I was sworn in to the Senate. They are the joys of my life. I hope that one day they will draw inspiration, as I did, from their upbringing in public service and will choose to devote themselves in some way to making our country and State better places.

I am so proud of you, my sons.

Next, to my devoted staff and to the staff who serves us here in the Senate. My personal staff has had the thank-

less task for 12 years of making me look better than I deserve, and in that, they have performed heroic service. They have never let me down. To the extent I have accomplished anything on behalf of the public, it is thanks to their tireless efforts and devotion. Each could have worked fewer hours and made more money doing something else, but they chose public service.

It has been an honor to work with you. I will miss each of you and can only hope we will remain in touch throughout the years. No one has been privileged to have better support than I have.

To the men and women who work in the Senate and make it possible for us to do our jobs, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude. You have always been unfailingly courteous and professional. The public is fortunate to have the benefits of your devotion. And on behalf of a grateful nation and a thankful Senator, let me express my appreciation.

Next, to my colleagues. More about each of us later, but let me simply say it has been my privilege, the privilege of my lifetime, to get to know each of you. There is not one of you who is not exceptional in some way or about whom I do not have a fond recollection. Each of you occupies a special place in my heart.

I am especially fortunate to have served my career in the Senate with Senator RICHARD LUGAR. I have often thought Congress would function better if all Members could have the kind of relationship we have been blessed to enjoy. He has been unfailingly thoughtful and supportive. Even though we occasionally have differed on specific issues, we have never differed on our commitment to the people of our State or to the strength of our friendship.

Dick, thanks to you and Char for so much. You are the definition of a statesman.

Finally, to the wonderful people of Indiana, for whom I have been privileged to work almost an entire adult life. Hoosiers are hard working, patriotic, devout, and full of common sense. We are Middle America and embrace middle-class values. The more of Indiana we can have in Washington, frankly, the better Washington will be.

To my fellow Hoosiers, let me say that while my time in the Senate is drawing to a close, my love for you and devotion to our State will remain everlasting.

As I begin my final formal remarks on this floor, my mind goes back to my first speech as a U.S. Senator. It was an unusual beginning. I was the 94th Senator to deliver remarks in the first impeachment trial of a President since 1868. The session was closed to the public; emotions ran high; partisan divisions were deep. It was a constitutional crisis, and the eyes of the Nation and the world looked to the Senate.

My first day as Senator, I was sworn in as a juror in that trial. There were no rules. All 100 of us gathered in the

Old Senate Chamber. The debate was hot, but we listened to each other. We all knew that the fate of the Nation and the judgment of history—things far more important than party loyalty or ideological purity—were in our hands.

Consensus was elusive. Finally, we appointed Ted Kennedy—JOHN KERRY's esteemed colleague—a liberal Democrat, and Phil Gramm, a conservative Republican, to hammer out a compromise. And they did. Their proposal was adopted unanimously.

The trial of our chief magistrate, even in the midst of a political crucible, was conducted in accordance with the highest principles of due process and the rule of law. The constitutional balance of powers was preserved and the Presidency saved. The Senate rose above the passions of the moment and did its duty.

Three years later, the Senate was once more summoned to respond in a moment of crisis. The country had been attacked and thousands killed in an act of suicidal terror. This building had been targeted for destruction and death, and that would have occurred but for the uncommon heroism of ordinary citizens. I was told not to return to my home for fear assassins might be lying in wait. So I picked up my sons from their school, and we spent the night with a neighbor.

Two days later, those Senators who could make it back to Washington gathered in the Senate Dining Room. There were no Democrats or Republicans there, just Americans. Without exception, we resolved to defend the Nation and to bring to justice the perpetrators of that horrible crime. The feeling of unity and common purpose was palpable.

Fast-forward another 7 years. In October 2008, I was summoned, along with others, late at night to a meeting just off this floor. The financial panic that had been gathering force for several months had attained critical mass.

The Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Paulson, spoke first. He turned to the new head of the Federal Reserve, Ben Bernanke, and said: Ben, give the Senators a status report.

Bernanke, in his low-key, professorial manner, said: The global economy is in a free fall. Within 48 to 72 hours, we will experience an economic collapse that could rival the Great Depression. It will take millions of jobs and thousands of businesses with it. Companies with which all of you are familiar will fail. Trillions of dollars in savings will be wiped out.

There was silence. We looked at each other, Democrats and Republicans, and asked only one question: What can be done?

The actions that emanated from that evening helped to avoid an economic catastrophe. The jobs of millions and millions of people were saved, businesses endured. But the measures required were unpopular. My calls were running 15,000 to 20,000 opposed and