

Peter G. Peterson Foundation, an organization that is single-mindedly focused on cutting long-term deficits. Last week, he testified before the bipartisan deficit reduction panel. He said it is a "myth that we cannot address our current economic crisis and our long-term fiscal crisis at the same time." Yet that is what we are hearing from Republicans: We can't do both of those; we have to focus on the deficit, and don't worry about the crisis we have right now.

David Walker continued:

In our view, the answer is to continue to pursue selected short-term initiatives designed to stimulate the economy and address unemployment, but to couple these actions with specific meaningful actions designed to resolve our long-term structural deficits.

Well, I agree. We have to address the short term and then think about the things we have to do here to address the long-term problems of the deficit.

So, again, for the sake of all of the families who have written in to my office, for all of the families who are at the end of the line, I urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to stop this cruel obstructionism and do the right thing right now for people who desperately need our help. Stop the filibuster. Let us vote. There are more than 50 votes. There is a majority here to extend unemployment benefits. I ask the minority to allow us to vote on it, to help these families in desperate need all over the country.

It is my intention, as often as I can, to get to the floor to continue to speak about the desperate needs of those families we cannot continue to ignore.

To those who think they can gain politically at the polls in November, who think they can gain politically by having people suffer more, by having them more desperate and more destitute, I say that is an aberration, that is a total abdication of our responsibility as officers, as people who are sworn to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States. It is unworthy. It is unworthy of a great country for their leaders, for their elected leaders, to show they can get political gain by making people more desperate than they are today.

So I hope we can have the vote, we can extend the unemployment benefits, and we can help people who really need a lifeline right now. Anything short of that is not worthy of our great country. I urge the minority to let the bill come up for a vote so we can vote it through. It should be done this week.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HAGAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in

morning business for such time as I may consume.

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

CONGRESSIONAL TO-DO LIST

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, the to-do list in the Congress, and especially in the Senate, is long and difficult. We have witnessed all of this year a determined minority to act as a set of human brake pads. The minority has tried to stop almost everything in the Senate, including providing extended unemployment benefits for those who are out of work during the country's deepest recession since the Great Depression. It is unbelievable to me.

It seems to me everyone should understand that when we are in a deep recession, as we have been—and we are coming out of it—that is the time to extend unemployment benefits because it is necessary to do. Yet it, too, has gotten caught in this trap of saying no to everything.

I wish to go over just a bit of the to-do list in the Senate. First and foremost, there is no question that one of the most significant challenges facing this country is debt and deficits. Everybody understands that. The question is, How do we deal with it?

The President is criticized for describing what he took over, but it is pretty important. You go to a rental car dealership and they want you to look around and see what the car is like before you rent it, right? This President ran for President, but when he took over this economy, had he done nothing, not lifted a finger, the Federal budget deficit was going to be \$1.3 trillion. On the first month of his Presidency, the economy he was left with had 680,000 people losing their jobs in that month.

This economy was in steep decline. That is what he inherited. It is not my taking a half hour to describe what was wrong in the previous 8 years, it is stating the obvious. What do we try to do about that?

Well, the President has created this commission to try to address the deficits and debt that have come from this steep economic decline. When a country is experiencing a very deep recession, there is less revenue coming in. We were losing about \$400 billion in revenue that we used to get. And then we have higher expenditures going out because we have the economic stabilizers that we pay for in order to help people during times of economic distress. So we had these unbelievable Federal budget deficits. That is not surprising. That will happen when there is a very steep economic downturn.

But we can't, it seems to me, go into this with a structural imbalance, as we had, and then have a deep recession and have deficits explode and then not have a plan to deal with them. So the question is for all of us—the President and the Congress—what do we do?

The President has created a high-level bipartisan commission to say: All right, come up with a set of recommendations by the end of this year of what we can do. What are the range of issues with everything on the table? Yes, discretionary spending, military spending, entitlements, all of it. What is the menu necessary to put this country back on track?

In 2001, President Bush proposed very large tax cuts. I voted no on the floor of the Senate, and I said the reason I am voting no is that I don't think we should provide 10 years of very large tax cuts just because we had a surplus the last year of Bill Clinton's Presidency. We had a budget surplus—the first budget surplus we had in 30 years. They estimated that not only would we have a budget surplus that year, but we would have surpluses for the next 10 years.

I said: Let's be a little conservative. What if something happens? What if we don't have the surpluses?

They said: Don't worry about that; let's give large tax cuts—and the bulk of it, by the way, went to the wealthiest Americans. Without my vote, that passed. It did a lot of strange things.

Among the tax cuts was a cut in the estate tax that took the estate tax over these 9 years down, down, down, and down so that this year we have a zero estate tax. Think of that. The estate tax in this country this year is zero. We have about 400 billionaires in America. I believe four of them have died in this year. This is the "Throw Mama From the Train" year, as the title of the movie goes. This is the year when, if you have a lot of money and you are going to go, this is the year, I suppose, and those who are related to you might think there is divine providence here.

Let me put up this chart. In today's newspaper, it says George Steinbrenner, the colorful owner of the New York Yankees, died. I didn't know George Steinbrenner, but he was quite an extraordinary man, I am sure—a successful businessman and a controversial owner of the New York Yankees. But he was also a billionaire. Today, the Washington Post talks about the fact that this year the estate tax is at zero, so his estate will have no tax obligation at all.

Let me just observe that for the largest estates, most of the wealth comes from the appreciation of assets over the years and has never been taxed. So it has never had to bear a tax to send kids to school or build roads or provide for police or provide for our defense needs—none of it. We have had four billionaires die this year. And we have this goofy process, which the previous administration created, to go to a zero estate tax this year and then spring back to an estate tax next year. It is just nutty.

Do you want to know how to reduce the Federal budget deficit? How about fixing a few of these things. That ought to be on the to-do list. It is embarrassing, it seems to me, for those who

understand fiscal policy and understand there is a responsibility for all Americans not just to be glad they are Americans, but also to participate in the things Americans have to participate in together, that that includes paying some taxes, yes, and some estate taxes. It is embarrassing that we have a zero estate tax for the wealthiest Americans at this point. That makes no sense to me.

We have a proposed extension of the tax cuts for middle-income workers that comes from the 2001 tax bill that President Bush pushed through this Congress. One of my colleagues was on a show this Sunday and said: Well, we want to also give a tax cut to the top 2 percent of the American income earners. The moderator of the show said: That is going to cost 680-some billion dollars in lost revenue. How do you pay for that?

My colleague, who talks about the Federal budget deficits a lot and the need to deal with them, said: We don't have to pay for tax cuts.

It seems to me basic arithmetic books allow us to add 1 and 1 and get 2—from time to time, at least. So we are going to deal with the Federal budget deficits by extending income tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans? We are going to deal with the Federal budget deficits by having a zero estate tax obligation for somebody who dies and has a billion or billions of dollars?

What about the notion of going to war twice, in Iraq and Afghanistan, and not paying a penny for it? We have all of these gatherings to say goodbye—particularly in the National Guard—to a National Guard unit that will be sent to Iraq or Afghanistan. We say God-speed and be safe. When they come home, we say welcome home. We do everything except pay the bill. We send them to war, have them strap on ceramic body armor in the morning, walk in harm's way and get shot at. But this Congress doesn't have the courage to decide that we ought to pay for wars we are fighting. All of it has been piled on the debt.

Some of us stood in this well and said let's pay for it, and we were told if we do that and try to pay for it, the President will veto it because we are trying to raise revenue. That is right, raising revenue to pay for the cost of sending America's men and women in uniform to fight for this country. It used to be essential, not optional. It was the moral and responsible thing to do. All of this has been charged and added to the debt. So the soldiers go fight and come home, and they will pay the bill as well. That makes no sense to me.

I have described at great length the tax avoidance going on in this country. I described that some of the highest income earners get to pay 15 percent carried interest. They get to pay some of the lowest tax rates, and that is not enough. Some of them are running them through tax haven countries and are playing deferred compensation games in order to avoid paying any-

thing. They want all that America has to offer except responsibility to pay their taxes.

That is true with some very large American corporations as well. The company that was drilling out in the gulf—the licensed company drilling for BP—Transocean had, I believe, 1,200 employees in Houston, TX, and 12 employees in Switzerland. What was the deal there? Well, they moved their home office to Switzerland, despite the fact that they just had a dozen employees there and they had 1,200 in Houston. Why did they do that? To avoid paying taxes, I assume.

There is a to-do list. Maybe we can shut down some of these schemes. How about an estate tax for estates worth billions of dollars, or paying for the cost of war as our soldiers are asked to go fight it? Cutting spending—some come out here and talk about cutting spending. I support that—in the right way. We have a lot of areas where Federal agencies can tighten their belts. By the way, it is one thing to talk about it, it is another thing to do it.

Some years ago, when I came to the Congress, there was \$46 million allocated to build a new Federal courthouse in Fargo, ND. I said I thought that was outrageous. Yes, it is in my State, but I thought it was outrageous. I cut it to \$23 million—from \$46 million to \$23 million—in half—and the courthouse got built for \$19 billion. That was in my State. I was critical of spending in my own State.

I have come to the floor recently critical of what is being proposed to be spent on the small northern border ports of entry, which I think is an excessive amount of money. Yes, those are in my State as well. I think we all ought to take a hard look at Federal spending and look at where we can and should begin to make some cuts.

Finally, when we talk about deficits—we talk a lot about budget deficits. But nobody talks much about the trade deficit. This morning there was a story: Trade deficit jumps to \$42 billion, economists downgrade growth forecasts. I wrote a book about this several years ago. I described in that book, in great detail, what is happening: shipping jobs overseas, going in search of low-wage countries where they can move their production in order to produce and sell the product back in our country. All of that ratchets up this unbelievable deficit. We have had trade deficits in recent years, with \$700 billion and \$800 billion in merchandise trade deficits. The budget deficit is money that we are going to owe to ourselves. We cannot make that case with the trade deficit. We owe that to other countries, and we are going to repay that with a lower standard of living in our country someday.

This is not just about deficits, it is about jobs. When we run these kinds of deficits and see plants and factories closing in this country—5 million factory workers have lost their jobs because we see this unbelievable drain of

jobs leaving our country in search of lower wages elsewhere. We have to address this, and we have to address it in the right way. I will talk about that at some point, on another day. It is not rocket science to understand that debt is debt and deficits are deficits. We have to address these issues.

Now, one other point on this economy. I was on a program the other day on CNBC. They said: What about this notion that because of what you are doing on promoting additional regulations on Wall Street and other issues, you are antibusiness—you Democrats in Congress and the Democratic administration are antibusiness?

I have heard a couple of CEOs say that. I said: You know, it is byzantine to me. If you want to run a big company in this country and do business here and look at something that is antibusiness, look at Wall Street and see what they did. See the cesspool of greed they created with a bubble of speculation that was unprecedented in the history of this country—selling and buying things that had no value, wagering rather than investing, using exotic instruments such as credit default swaps and much more, and planting loans out there for homeowners who could not repay them—giving a \$780,000 home loan to somebody making \$18,000 a year, creating liars loans, saying: Come and get a loan from us, and you don't have to disclose your income. It is called a no-doc loan. Come and get a loan from us, and you don't have to disclose your income or pay any principal the first year—or come and get a loan from us, but don't tell us your income, don't pay any principal the first year, or any interest, and we will make the first 12 payments for you.

Then what would they do, Country-wide mortgage? They would take these loans, pay big bonuses to the people who put the loans out there—the brokers—and wrap them into securities and sell the securities up to hedge funds, investment banks, and they were all making massive profits. Then we had others who would look at these securities and make credit default swaps—wagers on whether these bonds would be good.

What was going on in this country is unbelievable. The whole thing was a house of cards, and it came collapsing down. Now we decide we are going to put regulations in place to say: You cannot do that anymore. You damn near ruined this country's economy, and we won't let you do it anymore.

One of the top manufacturing CEOs in this country said it is antibusiness—the administration is antibusiness. It is not antibusiness to put into place effective, tough regulations to say: Do business the right way. If you do what you have been doing, we are going to put handcuffs on you because it almost ruined this country's economy.

It is not antibusiness to insist that business be done in the right way, when in the basement of the SEC four companies came in to get the SEC, in

the last decade, to change the rules so they could go from 12 times leverage to 30 times leverage, and they did it with almost no notice from everybody, with all these handshakes that go on.

When that goes on and regulators say: You know what. Don't worry. It is going to be a new business-friendly place. We won't look. Do what you want. We don't care—when that all happened and it caused the near collapse of the American economy and our way of life, we have a right, it seems to me, without being called antibusiness, to say there needs to be effective regulators and regulations to make sure this doesn't happen again.

Fifteen years ago, I wrote the lead story for the Washington Monthly magazine, and the title was "Very Risky Business." That was the lead story in the Washington Monthly magazine that I wrote 16 years ago.

What was it about? It was about banks in America trading derivatives on their own proprietary accounts. I said then that we just as well put a blackjack table in their lobby. That is just gambling. We ought not allow it. We know who is going to pick up the bill—the American taxpayer.

It was 11 years ago on the floor of this Senate that I stood up and opposed repealing the laws from the Great Depression—Glass-Steagall and others—that were put in place to protect our country, that separated banking from securities and prohibited certain practices that led to the Great Depression. Then, all of a sudden, it is time to modernize; that is old-fashioned. The proposal to repeal those laws went through here like a hot knife through butter. Eight of us voted no—eight of us. I stood on the floor of the Senate and said: I think within a decade we are going to see massive taxpayer bailouts. I did not have a crystal ball; I just felt this was an unbelievable mistake.

The fact is, we have a right and a responsibility to put together effective regulatory mechanisms that will prevent this from happening again. I understand there are interests out there that will howl so loud, you will hear them coast to coast. It does not matter. This is about what is best for the American people, what is best for this country's economy to expand and create jobs once again.

The to-do list, as I indicated, is fairly lengthy. I have not touched a number of issues. The most important point, obviously, is to find a way to create new jobs.

As I indicated, it is like a bathtub where you have a faucet and a drain. The faucet is, we need to try to create conditions in which new jobs will be created. How do we do that? We give people confidence about the future. It is hard to have confidence when you take a look at the economic circumstances of this country right now. If people are confident, they do things that manifest that confidence and the economy expands. That is our responsibility to do.

Even as we try to provide more confidence, that means tackling tough issues that will give people a feeling that they can expect a better future, can make investments, can hire people. That is part of the faucet—to put new jobs into this economy. We also need to plug the drain. Every single day, we have jobs leaving for China and elsewhere in search of cheap labor. I have spoken about that many times as well. As I said, I have written a book about that.

We need to work on all of those issues, and jobs has to be issue No. 1. It is the most important issue. It makes everything else possible for the American people. Right now, as I speak, there are millions and millions of people who are out of work. Million Americans have lost their jobs just in the manufacturing area in the last 8 years. We are short somewhere perhaps in the neighborhood of 18 to 20 million jobs in this country. We have to get the engine moving again. We have to get opportunities to expand jobs all across this country. There is a lot to do to make that happen.

TRAVEL TO CUBA

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, while I am on the floor, I wish to make a point about another piece of public policy I have worked on for some while.

The House of Representatives last week passed legislation through the Agriculture Committee that would lift the travel ban that is now imposed on American citizens to Cuba. I have been to Cuba and have met with the Cuban Government, dissidents, people who have been in prison. It is 90 miles off our shore.

There is an embargo on Cuba and a travel ban to Cuba. This chart shows the ten U.S. Presidents under which this embargo has existed. As one can see, a fair number of Presidents have come and gone while this embargo and travel ban to Cuba has been in place.

The problem with it that I see is this: This embargo is and has always been Fidel Castro's biggest excuse.

Your cities are falling down, your economy is in trouble, things are awful in Cuba.

His response: Yes. That is because this 500-pound gorilla has had its fist around our neck with an embargo for 50 years. You try to run this country.

It is his biggest excuse.

Cuba is a Communist country. I have no interest in doing anything that is helpful to the government at all. I do have an interest in trying to help the Cuban people.

Deciding to tell the American people: We will restrict your right to travel; we are going to infringe on your freedom; our government says you cannot travel, American citizen, to Cuba—I think that is unbelievable. By what right does our government say you cannot travel to Cuba?

Let me show where Americans can travel. It is perfectly appropriate, if

you can get a visa, to travel to Iran, according to the Office of Foreign Assets Control in the Treasury Department.

OFAC, by the way, in the basement, the deep bowels of the Treasury Department, are supposed to be tracking money to terrorists. But about a fourth of their resources are devoted to tracking American citizens who are suspected of vacationing in Cuba. Think of that. In a world beset by terrorist threats, we have folks who are trying to figure out: Are there American citizens who have gone to Cuba whom we can track down and against whom we can levy a \$10,000 fine?

You can go to Iran, OFAC says. That is not a problem. You are an American citizen and you want to go to Iran, that is OK.

If you are an American citizen and you would like to see Kim Jong Il while he is still in office, you can go to North Korea. That is not a big deal for OFAC. If you want to go to Communist North Korea, no problem at all.

You want to go to China, a Communist country? Not a problem. You want to go to Vietnam, a Communist country? That is no problem. I have been to both, by the way. Why have we said that about Vietnam and China? Because we have a very specific policy with respect to that issue. We have said we believe that engagement through trade and travel is the most effective way to move both China and Vietnam toward greater human rights. Let me say that again. Our official policy—Republicans and Democrats—has been that we believe the most effective way to move China and Vietnam—Communist countries—toward greater human rights is through trade and travel through engagement. Engagement. The only outlier to that is Cuba, which is 90 miles off our shore. And Fidel Castro pokes his finger in our eye every chance he gets.

We decided some while ago—many Presidents ago, actually—to put together an embargo, which has not worked at all, which includes restricting the American people's right to travel. Then in 2003, leading up to the elections in 2004, President Bush made this even tighter. He eliminated people-to-people visits in 2003; eliminated secondary school education travel; restricted family travel to once every 3 years; restricted amateur athletic travel. Essentially, he tied it very tight. The upshot of that was, I guess they all felt good that they were going to tighten restrictions around Cuba and tell those Cuban Americans who felt that is the right thing to do that this was something the administration was going to do to be helpful to them.

Here is what the Office of Foreign Assets Control says about travel to Cuba. I just described that North Korea is fine and travel to Iran is fine, China and Vietnam are fine. They say:

Unless otherwise authorized, any person subject to U.S. jurisdiction who engages in any travel-related transaction in Cuba violates the regulations.