

here that causes us to focus on it in the right way. Again, both sides have had great problems in this regard.

What we need to do as a body, as a Senate, is to create a construct that forces us to cap spending and incentivize growth. I plan on offering legislation later this year. I realize this is a political season and nothing serious will be taken up. What I want to do as a body is to focus on the amount of spending we deal with in Washington as a percentage of our gross domestic product, as I have been discussing, and to develop a construct that causes us over time to move to that cap. I realize we will not be able to do it overnight, but it seems to me if we can adopt that kind of thinking where we look at governmental spending as a percentage of GDP—Erskine Bowles, who is working right now as head of the deficit reduction commission, has made a major contribution by throwing out a number, and I am open for negotiation—to me, if we can focus on that kind of construct, then it is in everybody's interest to hope the gross domestic product grows.

As the gross domestic product grows, as our economy grows, and the types of issues we face as they relate to cutting spending are less difficult to deal with, we would be unified toward getting to a point that is appropriate as it relates to spending so our indebtedness does not put us in the same kind of situation in which Greece found itself. But at the same time, after we have done that, then we could agree on policies that actually incentivize growth because as the economy grows, it is easier to deal with this issue.

I will come to my conclusion. The fact is, this is becoming a cliché. I realize it is said over and over again, but we are, in fact, the first generation of Americans in a situation where we likely, if we don't change our course of action, will leave the country in lesser good shape than we found it. As a matter of fact, we will leave the country in worse shape.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator has 2 minutes remaining.

Mr. CORKER. I appreciate the cue.

The fact is, I don't think there is anybody in this body who would consciously wake up and spend every day of their life taking lavish vacations, going to nice hotels, eating out at night, running that up on a credit card, and then leaving that for their heirs to pay. There is nobody in this body who would consider doing that. But that is exactly what we are doing right now in Washington because of the way we are handling our fiscal affairs. We are running up a tab that our grandchildren, some of the children in this audience who have come in as students, will be left to pay.

I believe in American exceptionalism. I think we are, in fact, the greatest country that ever existed and ever will. I think the role we play in this world creates all kinds of gains as it re-

lates to citizens' ways of life throughout the world. I would hate to see us as a country end up so diminished not only because of the tremendous impact it would have on our citizens—we have seen what has happened with this financial crisis and the distortions it has created throughout the economy, the hardships it has created for so many Americans—but I would hate for us to be so diminished because of our indebtedness, so diminished so that we had to talk to lenders about those austerity measures we had to take as a country for them to continue to loan us money, for us to be so diminished that we did not continue to play the exceptional role we play in the world, the exceptional role we play in continuing to raise up Americans' dreams and wishes and continue to allow them to actually pursue.

I plan on offering legislation. I have a nine-page bill. I know there are no bills around here that get seriously considered that are nine pages. Others, I know, will weigh in. But I sure hope to work with people on both sides of the aisle. I plan on offering legislation later this year or the first of the next Congress. I hope we as a Congress will deal with this issue in an appropriate way. I am looking to work with people on both sides of the aisle.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maine.

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I come to the floor to discuss the Defense authorization bill and the don't ask, don't tell provisions included in it. Let me begin by making my position crystal clear: I agree with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, ADM Mike Mullen, that the don't ask, don't tell law should be repealed. It should be repealed contingent upon the certifications of the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that its repeal would not have an adverse impact on military readiness, recruitment, and retention. Those are exactly the provisions included in the Defense authorization bill.

My view is that our Armed Forces should welcome the service of any qualified individual who is willing and capable of serving our country. The bottom line for me is this: If an individual is willing to put on the uniform of our country, to be deployed in war zones such as Iraq and Afghanistan, to risk his or her life for our country, then we should be expressing our gratitude to those individuals, not trying to exclude them from serving or expel them from the force.

That is why during consideration of this bill in May, I supported the compromise provisions that were put forth by Senator LIEBERMAN and Senator LEVIN. At a previous Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, I asked Admiral Mullen if there was any evi-

dence at all that allowing gay and lesbian troops to serve had harmed military readiness in those countries that allow their service now. At least 28 countries, including Great Britain, Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, and Israel allow open service by lesbian and gay troops. We have no greater allies than Great Britain, Australia, Canada, and Israel. None of these countries—not one—reports morale or recruitment problems. At least nine of these countries have deployed their forces alongside American troops in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and at least 12 of these nations are allowing open service and are currently fighting alongside U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

There is a cost involved to end our current policy. According to a 2005 GAO report, American taxpayers spend more than \$30 million each year to train replacements for gay troops discharged under the don't ask, don't tell policy. The total cost reported since the statute was implemented, according to GAO, has been nearly \$200 million. That doesn't count the administrative and legal costs associated with investigations and hearings, and the military schooling of gay troops such as pilot training and linguist training.

We are losing highly skilled troops to this policy. According to the GAO, 8 percent of the servicemembers let go under don't ask, don't tell held critical occupations defined as services such as interpreters. Three percent had skills in an important foreign language such as Arabic, Farsi or Korean.

More than 13,000 troops have been dismissed from the military simply because of their sexual orientation since President Clinton signed this law in 1993. Society has changed so much since 1993, and we need to change this policy as well.

But let me say that I respect the views of those who disagree with me on this issue, such as the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator MCCAIN; and I will defend the right of my colleagues to offer amendments on this issue and other issues that are being brought up in connection with the Defense authorization bill.

There are many controversial issues in this bill. They deserve to have a civil, fair, and open debate on the Senate floor. That is why I am so disappointed that rather than allowing full and open debate and the opportunity for amendments from both sides of the aisle, the majority leader apparently intends to shut down the debate and exclude Republicans from offering a number of amendments.

This would be the 116th time in this Congress that the majority leader or another member of the majority has filed cloture rather than proceeding to the bill under an agreement that would allow amendments to be debated.

What concerns me even more is the practice of filling the amendment tree to prevent Republican amendments. If that is done on this bill, it will be the 40th time.

I find myself on the horns of a dilemma. I support the provisions in this bill. I debated for them. I was the sole Republican in the committee who voted for the Lieberman-Levin language on don't ask, don't tell. I think it is the right thing to do. I think it is only fair. I think we should welcome the service of these individuals who are willing and capable of serving their country. But I cannot vote to proceed to this bill under a situation that is going to shut down the debate and preclude Republican amendments. That, too, is not fair.

So I am going to make one final plea to my colleagues to enter into a fair time agreement that will allow full and open debate, full and open amendments to all the provisions of this bill, including don't ask, don't tell, even though I will vote against the amendment to strike don't ask, don't tell provisions from this bill.

Now is not the time to play politics simply because an election is looming in a few weeks. Again, I call upon the majority leader to work with the Republican leaders to negotiate an agreement on the terms of debate for this bill so that we can debate this important defense policy bill this week, including the vital issue of don't ask, don't tell.

I thank the Chair.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MERKLEY). Morning business is closed.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2011—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 3454, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to the bill (S. 3454) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2011 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I hope we will proceed to the Defense authorization bill this afternoon. The Senator from Maine, as far as I am concerned, has raised a very legitimate question about whether amendments will be offerable to this bill, and the majority leader has spoken on that on the Record. This is what he said last Thursday. He said:

... in addition to issues I have talked about in the last couple days, there are many other important matters that both sides of the aisle wish to address. I am willing to work with Republicans on a process

that will permit the Senate to consider these matters and complete the bill as soon as possible, which likely will be after the recess.

So the majority leader has said he is more than willing to engage in that process.

If that process does not lead to a fair result, then—if we can get to the bill—if the Republicans feel there has not been adequate opportunity to offer amendments, the opportunity will be there to prevent the passage of the bill until those amendments are considered. This is the normal process. But to deny an opportunity to move to the bill so we can engage in a debate on amendments and so we hopefully will have an opportunity, as we should, to debate amendments on the bill, it seems to me is prejudging the outcome of the debate.

The time to determine whether there has been adequate opportunity to debate the bill is after you have had an opportunity to debate the bill. That judgment cannot be made in advance, particularly in the face of the majority leader's assurance. I agree with the Senator from Maine that it is important this assurance be there. It is there, it was there, in part, because of the issue she has raised over the last few days.

When the majority leader says let us get to the bill because he agrees—he has talked about a number of issues, but in addition to the issues which he has talked about, which include a debate on don't ask, don't tell, include a debate on the DREAM Act—in his words, “there are many other important matters that both sides of the aisle wish to address” and that he is “willing to work with Republicans on a process that will permit the Senate to consider these matters and complete the bill as soon as possible, which likely will be after the recess.”

But we need to get to the bill. We need to get to the bill so we can then begin to debate amendments. I think many Senators have amendments they want to offer. It is not unusual on a Defense authorization bill. We usually have hundreds of amendments that are offered. Last year, I believe we adopted something like 60 amendments. That process will again occur but only if we can get to the bill.

To insist in advance there be an agreement, let me tell you, as manager of the bill, I love unanimous consent agreements. I love time limits. I love time agreements. I love agreements to limit amendments. That is fine. But until you get to the bill, you are not in a position to work out such agreements. These are theoretical issues. We do not even know what amendments are going to be offered to this bill—until we get to the bill. How can you have an agreement on what amendments will be in order when we have not gotten to the bill and the amendments are not even filed?

So it is a legitimate point the Senator from Maine makes that she wants to be sure, as I hope every Senator

does, that there will be adequate consideration of amendments during the debate on this bill.

The Republicans have the ability to stop a completion of consideration of this bill until—unless and until—there is an opportunity to have a debate on amendments the way we usually do on the authorization bill. That ability to stop the completion of this bill is there, but it can only be utilized if we get to the bill.

To try to figure out in advance all the amendments which might be filed and what amendments will be ordered and what time agreements will be reached is, it seems to me as a practical matter, impossible to do.

The assurance of the majority leader was there and is there. I am not going to repeat it because I have already quoted it twice—but that assurance that other amendments, besides the ones he has talked about publicly, will be in order. Again, I think everybody understands the rules of this place. Nonrelevant amendments can be offered. They have in the past on this bill, including by the Senator from Arizona, who offered a very nonrelevant amendment against the wishes of Senator WARNER, an amendment having to do with campaign finance reform not too many years ago. That amendment, although nonrelevant, was passed by this body. I supported that amendment, against the wishes of the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Senator WARNER.

There are dozens of nonrelevant amendments which have been offered on the Defense authorization bill. To suggest somehow or other that only began last year when there was a—or on the last bill—when there was a debate on hate crimes is inaccurate. It was not a debate on the addition of the hate crimes amendment which began the consideration of nonrelevant amendments on the Defense authorization bill. As a matter of fact, it was the fourth time the hate crimes amendment was adopted on the Defense authorization bill. The first time was when Senator Thurmond was chairman of the committee, against his wishes but nonetheless adopted. There are literally dozens of other nonrelevant amendments that have been considered. Why? Because the rules of the Senate permit consideration of nonrelevant amendments on bills.

This is one of the few authorization bills that needs to be passed, not just because it supports the troops, critical not only in wartime but generally, but also because of the rules of this body requiring there be an authorization bill for defense for a number of specific matters, including military construction.

So our hope is we can begin consideration of this bill. I am going to give the reasons why we need to consider this bill in a few moments. But, again, I wish to assure colleagues there is plenty of opportunity to prevent this bill from being adopted if there is not adequate consideration of amendments