

up what you want. If you want to bring up a bill about double-paned windows, that is fine. If you want to bring up don't ask, don't tell, that will take a week of debate. If you want to bring up a bill about this, that or the other, that is fine. You set the priorities.

There is one other thing I heard during this discussion: Why aren't we working?

I will tell you why we are not working. It is because of the schedule of the Democratic leader. Forty times he has brought up legislation, and then he said there will be no amendment and no debate. That is like having the Grand Ole Opry open and saying: There will be no singing. That is what we do. We offer amendments. We debate on behalf of the American people. This is the only body in the world where you have unlimited debate and unlimited amendment.

When you bring up any bill, whether it is the double-paned windows bill that was so urgently presented a moment ago, whether it is the New START treaty, which has to do with our nuclear modernization and our national security, we bring it up, hopefully, after it has had careful consideration by the committees, where the military experts and the foreign policy experts have weighed in, and then we have a debate and everyone gets to offer their amendments and everyone gets to say what they think about those amendments. If we have to stay Monday night, we should stay Monday night—and Tuesday night and Wednesday night and we can even stay Friday. We have not voted on one Friday this year. That is not because of the Republican schedule. We are not in charge of the schedule. So, why is there nobody here to debate? Because there is nothing to debate. The Democratic leader brings up a bill and then he says there will be no amendment and no debate.

My hope is that as a result of this more evenly balanced Senate and the good will of the Democratic leader, whom I greatly respect, and the Republican leader—he and Senator REID are very much veterans of the Senate. They respect this institution greatly. I would like to see us get back to the point at which we were not very long ago.

I can remember the Senate in the days of the late Senator Byrd and Senator Baker, with whom I first came to the Senate as a staff member. They basically had an agreement that worked like this: Senator Baker was majority leader for 4 years, Senator Byrd majority leader for 4 years, but they led their parties for 8 years. When they did, Senator Baker would say to the committees: Don't bring a bill to the floor unless it has the chairman and the ranking minority committee member both agreeing to it. Then, when it came to the floor, they would say: All right, let everybody offer their amendments. There might be 300 amendments. Then, after a while, they would offer a motion to agree to have no

more amendments, and usually they would get that. Then they would, by discussion, narrow that down to a number and then people would get their amendments. You might have to be here late one night. You might have to be here Friday. You might have to be here Saturday. Senators would say: Well, I wonder how important this amendment is. But the American people were heard on the floor of the Senate.

So it is my great hope that in the new Congress, where there will be a relatively even number of Senators—Democrats will still be setting the agenda, they can bring up whatever they wish—I would hope what we agree to do is to go back to this body being what it was and can be and should be.

We have 16 new Senators, 3 of them Democratic, 13 Republican. They ran for this office in very difficult races. It is not easy to do these days. They are here not just for their voices to be heard but for the voices of the people of their States to be heard—for the people of Kentucky, for the people of Wyoming, for the people of Pennsylvania, for the people of Delaware. They want to be heard here.

If we bring up the New START treaty or the double-paned window bill or the tax bill or whatever it is, the Senator from Delaware, the Senator from Pennsylvania, the Senator from Tennessee ought to have a chance to amend it, ought to have a chance to be heard. Then, after we do that, we can decide: OK. That is enough of that. Let's have a vote.

That is the way we do things. I think we can do that. I have seen it happen time and time again. We did it on the energy bill. We tried it on the immigration bill. Sometimes it works; sometimes it does not. It is a great way to legislate. So it would again be a joy to be a Member of the Senate.

This period between Thanksgiving and Christmas is not a great time to do very much. We have been here for 2 years. We just had an election. We are waiting for the new Members to come. They have their marching orders. I said to some of my friends the other day: My friends on the Democratic side keep insisting on an encore for a concert that drew a lot of boos.

I think what most Americans would like for us to do is keep the tax rates right where they are, fund the government before it runs out of money, consider the proposals for reducing the debt, and go home. If the President thinks it is important for us to deal with the New START treaty before Christmas, then he might say a word to the Democratic leader that after we deal with taxes and fund the government, that maybe that ought to be the next order of business instead of the double-paned window bill or any other variety of bills, all of which may be fine legislation. But you just do not walk in here 3 weeks before Christmas with some bill with nobody here and ask it be passed by unanimous consent.

That is not the way the American people want us to do business, and that does not give this body the respect it deserves.

So I greatly appreciate my friends on the other side and their passion for their point of view. I respect that passion. I think one of the cardinal rules of this body is never to question the motive of another Senator and always to respect the passion and point of view of another Senator. But I would like for us to get back to the point where you bring up something and we debate it—not you bring up something and you cut off amendments, you cut off debate, and then you do not do anything for a week. That is why nobody is here.

I will conclude with these remarks, by just restating our position. We sent this letter at the beginning of the week saying that the 42 Republican Senators want to use our voices to say that first we should fund the government, since we run out of money by the end of the week, and, second, we should deal with taxes so we can prevent a tax increase on anybody in the middle of an economic downturn. Then we should go to any other legislative item the majority leader wishes. Of course, he is free to bring up something like the New START treaty any time he wants to.

That seems, to me, to be a very reasonable approach, presented at the right time, in the right way, during a time when the President and the Republican and Democratic leaders are meeting together, when negotiations are going on about what the tax bill might be, when discussions are going on about how to fund the government, and when we are all in meetings right through this stretch about whether we are modernizing our nuclear weapons sufficiently so we can, in good conscience, vote to ratify the New START treaty.

Those are the most important issues, and that is what we should be talking about this month.

I thank the Presiding Officer and yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

JOB CREATION AND SPENDING

Mr. LEMIEUX. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the issues and the topics this body badly needs to get to. Just a month ago there was an election in this country, and the people of this country spoke loudly and clearly. What they said is they wanted this Congress to focus on two things: No. 1, they wanted us to focus on creating jobs. This is the most difficult economy anyone who is working now has ever had to experience.

In my home State of Florida, unemployment is nearly 12 percent. If you figure in all the people who are underemployed—who have lost their job and now must work two or three jobs to make even less than what they used to make to barely get by, to provide for their families—nearly one out of five people of working age in Florida are unemployed or underemployed.

We are in the top three in mortgage foreclosures. In the first half of the year, Floridians were No. 1 on being behind on their mortgage payments. Although there are some spots of hope and some things to look at as potentially growing our economy again, we just recently found out that in southeast Florida—which in many ways has been ground zero for mortgage foreclosures—mortgage foreclosures have gone up in the third quarter more than 25 percent over the second quarter.

Times are tough in Florida. Times are tough all across this country. So the people of this country spoke, and they sent new people to Washington who will be taking office—some have already taken office, most will take office in January—to get this country back to work. What they asked this Congress to do is to focus on job creation.

The second thing they want this Congress to do is to stop the out-of-control spending. This government is putting this country on the brink of financial disaster. We know from the Congressional Budget Office, which keeps count of spending in this country, that this last year, 2010, the Congress spent \$1.3 trillion more than it took in—\$1.3 trillion more than it took in. It took 200 years for this country to go in debt. Yet just this last year, this Congress went \$1.3 trillion in debt.

Our national debt—the total amount of deficits that have accumulated over time—is nearly \$14 trillion. In the past 4 years, the national debt has gone up \$5 trillion. The American people are worried about this. When I go around Florida and talk to my constituents, they tell me they are concerned about the future for their kids, for their grandkids. They wonder whether our children are going to grow up in a country that has the same promise and opportunity that we have all experienced.

So these have been the two big issues. They are resounding. If you turn on the television and watch any of these cable talk shows, the two issues that come up are jobs and the out-of-control spending. Yet despite the overwhelming chorus from the people of this country—which manifested itself a month ago on election day—this Congress is failing to address these two primary issues.

Why in the world are we talking about a bunch of ancillary issues—albeit important in their own right—when the most pressing issues facing this country, and what the American people want us to do, is to focus on these two issues?

Part and parcel of the economic problem is the uncertainty that is being caused by Washington. For the past 2 years, instead of focusing on creating jobs, creating an environment that would allow businesses to create jobs, we have created all sorts of uncertainty for American entrepreneurs. I come from a State of small businesses. There are not a lot of big businesses in Florida. When I meet with small business, they tell me there is so much uncertainty that it is preventing them from hiring.

They cite the health care bill. How do we know if we can hire a new person? If we do we may be under some new mandate, some new penalty or fine that will make us pay more. We don't know whether we can afford that new employee. Therefore, they do not hire. No wonder unemployment is so high and has not come down.

They wonder about the financial regulatory reform bill. One business in Florida told me they will move some of their employees overseas so as to not come under the restrictions of that bill.

Most of all what they tell me is they do not know what their taxes are going to be next year. They do not know what they are going to pay in taxes. Because they can't plan, they cannot hire. Because they can't plan, they do not buy that new piece of equipment. Because they can't plan, they do not take on that extra lease space or hire the construction company to build an addition on their building or build a new facility.

So all of this uncertainty created by Washington not having its focus on what the American people want Washington to have its focus on is exacerbating the problem with the economy. So why in the world—knowing for the past 2 years that these tax cuts were set to expire—have we not addressed them?

When we voted to adjourn before the election, I voted not to adjourn because I thought it was fundamentally unfair to the businesses and job creators in this country for us to leave and not finish our work with them not knowing what their taxes would be next year. I knew that would hurt the effort to employ more people in my State. Yet here we are, the first day of December, just a month left in the time of this Congress, and we still have not addressed the tax issues.

We are talking about food safety, we are talking about the DREAM Act, we are talking about the repeal of don't ask, don't tell. However you feel about those issues—and I respect that people have differing views—that is not what the American people are focused on. We should be about the work of focusing on the issues that matter most, putting first things first. What should be first is creating an environment so that entrepreneurs and job creators can get people back to work.

Secondly, we must tackle this issue of spending. We just saw the report

from the debt commission, and we are all still reviewing the good work they have done. Let me say, first of all, this is a serious proposal from serious and responsible people, and it is the kind of work that should be done in Washington. I don't agree with all of its provisions, but I am proud of the work they have done because it is serious, it is sober, and it addresses the compelling crisis that confronts us and threatens the very future of this country.

As the cochairmen of that commission—Erskine Bowles and former Senator Simpson—have said this crisis will not wait 10, 20 years. This crisis is now.

But as much as I respect the work they have done, it doesn't go nearly far enough. Realize that the proposals they have made will cut the national debt and deficit \$4 trillion. That is a lot of money. It is a good start. It is being widely condemned by Democrats and Republicans. It tackles defense spending, so some Republicans don't like it. It tackles Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security, so some Democrats don't like it. I think the Speaker of the House, NANCY PELOSI, dismissed it because of what it does on Social Security. But realize this: It only cuts \$4 trillion out of the next \$12 trillion that will be incurred in the next decade.

So let's put it in perspective. Right now our national debt is nearly \$14 trillion. It is projected to be \$26 trillion by 2020. If we adopted every proposal of the debt commission—every single one of them—we would reduce the projected national debt from \$26 trillion to \$22 trillion, and that is not enough. It is not even close to being enough.

Now, why is that the case? It is the case because we spend \$200 billion a year right now in our current budgetary environment on debt service—\$200 billion a year paying interest on money we have borrowed for things we should not have spent money on in the past.

Here is the truth the American people have not been told: For the past 30 or 40 years, this government has spent much more money than it has taken in. What it did first was it took the money out of Social Security and wrote an IOU to Social Security. When the Social Security money was unable to be raided anymore by Congress, which has been just recently, then this government had to go out and borrow the money from foreign countries such as China and Japan. That is why we have this huge unfunded portion of Social Security that is tens of trillions of dollars and that is why we have this national debt that is racking up.

For the last 30 or 40 years, this Congress has spent way more than it has taken in. Now we are in a situation where we put the future of this country in peril. At the end of this decade, if we have a \$26 trillion national debt—and even if it is \$22 trillion if we adopted every measure from the debt commission—we will still be \$800 to \$900 billion in debt service by the end of the decade, \$800 billion to \$900 billion. When

we are that far into our debt service payments—basically for the average American family this is similar to, thinking of this like a credit card, when you can't pay the minimum balance and every month the amount you owe keeps cascading more and more. That is where the American Government is headed.

When we get to \$800 billion or \$900 billion a year in interest payments, the government will not function. As Erskin Bowles said today, the world markets will not wait for that point. So what you are seeing in Europe right now with Greece and Ireland and Portugal and Spain will happen here, except there will not be a European Union or anybody else to bail out the United States of America.

It is a crisis. Yet this Congress is not doing anything about it. We are talking about adopting a continuing resolution because this Congress will not do an appropriations bill. A continuing resolution at its best will freeze spending at last year's level.

Some of my colleagues will say: That is good. See, we are not increasing the spending.

It is not an accomplishment, when last year we were more than \$1 trillion in deficit, to freeze spending at that level.

The two issues the American people want us to deal with are jobs and out-of-control government spending. Yet we are failing to do both. There is a lot of frustration in this Chamber. I watched some of my colleagues on the other side today come speak on the floor, and they are frustrated that we are not getting things done. I am frustrated too. Two of my colleagues are proposing a change to the way the procedures of this body work. They do not think it should take 60 votes for us to do some things.

I do not agree with them, but I share their frustration because, as much as I am privileged to be here—and I am in awe of this institution—the way this Congress works and this body works is dysfunctional. The way it should work and the way it used to work, from what people tell me who were here before, is that a proposal would come up, a piece of legislation, and it would come to the floor and we would all have a chance to offer an amendment. We would all have a chance to make it better.

My constituents in Florida think I have the opportunity to offer amendments and let their voices be heard through my actions. If my proposal is not good or not worthy, then it should not pass. But it should see the light of day. This was a time when Senators stayed by their desks and listened to the proposals and amendments of other Senators and were able to quickly call home to the group that the proposal might affect. Say it was an agricultural proposal. They might call their local farmers or if it would affect banks, they might call banks to see how it would affect their constituents in their home State, and the level of discourse was better.

The people of this country expect us to get to work. They expect us to get to work on the issues that matter most. They are suffering and we should get about the work that they want us to do because the future of the country is at stake.

I yield the floor.

ADVANCED PRACTICE REGISTERED NURSE PROGRAMS

Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, today I rise to recognize the need to transition the Advanced Practice Registered Nurse—APRN—programs at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences—USUHS—to the Doctorate of Nursing Practice. It was my hope to establish a program to educate advanced practice nurses at USUHS and in 1993 Congress founded the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences Graduate School of Nursing, GSN. Doctoral nursing programs are designed to prepare advanced practice nurses and Ph.D.s for the unique challenges of military health care. The GSN students explore the fields of nursing through a signature blend of science, research, and field training. The lessons learned on the USU campus and beyond the traditional classroom prepare the GSN graduates to take on a diverse range of challenges that have led to their success in any environment.

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing—AACN—Position Statement on the Doctorate of Nursing Practice, DNP, dated October 2004, identified 13 advanced practice degree recommendations in response to the increasing complexity of healthcare and rising patient acuties. In recommendation 10 of its position statement, the AACN stated, “the practice doctorate be the graduate degree for advanced nursing practice preparation including, but not limited, to the four current APRN roles: clinical nurse specialist, nurse anesthetist, nurse midwife and nurse practitioner.” Additionally, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing and the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists, Council on Accreditation have stated that APRN programs should be converted from the master's degree to Doctorate of Nursing Practice programs by 2015 and 2025, respectively. These endorsements were preceded by almost 4 years of research and consensus-building by an AACN task force charged with examining the need for the practice doctorate with a variety of stakeholder groups. Of the 388 APRN programs in the country, 72 percent are offering or planning DNP programs. To maintain professional standards for military APRNs and remain competitive for high quality students, the Graduate School of Nursing at USUHS must transition to the DNP for its APRN programs. A report is requested from USUHS, within 180 days, outlining the GSN's progress toward DNP program transition and planned implementation.

WORLD AIDS DAY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, next year marks the 30th anniversary of the first diagnosis by the Centers for Disease Control of acquired immune deficiency syndrome or AIDS. This year, 33.3 million people are living with HIV. Last year 2.6 million people were infected with HIV, and 1.8 million people died from AIDS. And today we commemorate World AIDS Day, acknowledging the suffering and death that AIDS has caused and reaffirming our commitment to fight the global AIDS pandemic.

For three decades this preventable disease has devastated families and communities. But there also has been a global response from the research community, government, health workers, and patient advocates to fight this disease and save lives. This battle has yielded notable victories. Fewer people are becoming infected with HIV, biomedical innovations have created drugs that can transform AIDS into a chronic disease rather than a death sentence, more people have access to HIV treatment, and mothers can prevent their babies from becoming infected with HIV. A recent CDC report, indicating that 11.4 million more people were tested for HIV in 2006 compared to 2009, highlights the advancements that have been made.

The U.S. has been at the frontline combating the AIDS pandemic. We have established aggressive and effective programs, notably the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program and the Tom Lantos and Henry J. Hyde U.S. Global Leadership against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Act, known more commonly as PEPFAR. These programs provide funding and support to initiatives combating AIDS and providing critical services to people in the U.S. and developing countries.

Progress has certainly been made, but the U.S. must continue to be a leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS. In the United States over 1.1 million people have HIV, but one in five of these people do not know they are infected. Each year 56,300 Americans become infected with HIV.

We can bring this number to zero. While Black Americans represent 12 percent of the U.S. population, they account for almost half of people living with HIV and half of new infections each year. We can alter the trajectory of this disease and eliminate these disparities.

World AIDS Day causes us to remember those who have been lost to this disease, but it is also an opportunity to renew our commitment to fighting the AIDS pandemic, to eliminating stigma against those with this disease, and to stopping the spread of HIV.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to make these goals a reality.