

The White House proposal, as outlined by the President's economic adviser yesterday, is to cut another \$6 billion and call it a day. Even more outrageous, they say the proposal meets us halfway. I won't get into their tortured justification. Suffice it to say that Politico says it requires Americans to "suspend disbelief." The Washington Post was equally unmoved by the White House logic. They said Democrats are disingenuous in suggesting they have worked hard to reduce spending, and they agree that calling the latest proposal an effort to meet us halfway is nonsense. That is the Washington Post. They agree that calling this latest proposal an effort to meet us halfway nonsense.

So amid all the fanfare yesterday, what the White House is proposing is little more than one more proposal to maintain the status quo—to give the appearance of action where there is none. The latest proposal is unacceptable and it is indefensible.

The American people are tired of hearing the same old talking points from our Democratic friends. They want action. In fact, they demand action. They want us to cut spending to help create a better environment for job creation. It is time for Washington Democrats to get serious.

Mr. President, I 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.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

BUDGET PRIORITIES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the American economy is struggling. We are coming out of recession—unfortunately, too slowly for most of us—but we are emerging.

I can recall the ominous days when we first learned of the terrible economic crisis facing our country. Some of us who serve in the Senate Chamber were called into a meeting with the Chairman of the Federal Reserve, Mr. Bernanke, and then Secretary of the Treasury Mr. Paulson, and they told us the grim news that if we didn't act and act quickly, we could see the American economy sinking lower, and perhaps even experience a global depression. It was a frightening time. It was a time before this current President came to office, and we had to act together on a bipartisan basis.

Decisions were made by many of us, trusting those in the Bush administration who told us if we didn't act and act quickly, jobs would be lost and businesses would fail and people would lose their savings, and it would be catastrophic. So we went forward with a plan that initially I thought to be

flawed but the only show in town, trying to help financial institutions survive the terrible economy and to turn this situation around. We can say now that most of the money—virtually all of the money—that was invested in these financial institutions has been repaid with interest to the Federal Government, which is the right thing. And we continue to pursue those such as AIG where the government has a substantial ownership in an effort to make certain that taxpayers recoup the investment that saved a major insurance company. That is a good thing.

Meanwhile, our economy moves forward at a slow pace, but at least it continues to move forward. New unemployment numbers for Illinois were released yesterday and new Federal numbers were released this morning. Those reports show that in Illinois, in the month of January, the unemployment rate was 9 percent, down from 9.3 percent. Also, 599,400 Illinoisans are looking for work, down from 620,600 last month. Nationally, in the month of February, the unemployment rate was 8.9 percent, down from 9.0 last month, and significantly down from where it was a few months ago. Also, 13.7 million Americans are looking for work, down from 13.9 million last month. The report also shows that the economy added 192,000 new jobs.

Unfortunately, the response of Congress has not taken into consideration how fragile this economy is and how important the recovery is. We hear from the other side—from Senator MCCONNELL this morning and others—that the biggest problem facing America today is our deficit. I would say to the Presiding Officer, who joins me in a bipartisan effort to try to deal with this deficit, we concede that point. The deficit is a major issue. But we want to take care that the way we solve the deficit issue is sensitive to the state of the economy and our need to work together to end this recession.

So that is why H.R. 1, the House Republican budget, is a bill which I can't support. It is not a good budget bill because it takes money out of key investments in our economy at a time when we need them the most. When we need to have better trained workers with skills for new jobs, the House budget on the Republican side devastates worker training programs.

Why would you do that in the midst of a recession with so many people out of work, at a time when we need more students graduating from college with diplomas and new skills and opportunities? The House Republican budget cuts the Pell grants—the amount of money given to those students from low-income families—by over \$800 a year. Many young people will have to give up on education and delay it because of that. How does that help us in our recovery? It doesn't.

Equally troubling is the House Republican budget, which makes devastating cuts in areas of research and innovation. I am not saying the best

jobs in America are going to be government jobs; they are not and they should not be. They are going to be private sector jobs. But time and again our private sector turns to our National Laboratories for the research on the products they need to compete in the world.

The rollout of the Chevy Volt was announced all across the Nation. General Motors was so proud. Here is an all-electric vehicle they are going to sell to America. I am glad they are doing it. It is not only environmentally responsible, but it reduces our dependence upon foreign energy.

How did General Motors—this great corporation—develop the Chevy Volt? The first stop was the Argonne National Laboratory outside of Chicago, where they worked with government scientists to build the battery to put in the Chevy Volt. That is important.

What is going to happen to the Argonne National Laboratory because of the House Republican budget? They will be forced to lay off one-third of their scientists, engineers, and support staff for the remainder of the year, and they will cancel up to 50 percent of their research activities, not just in new battery technology but in developing the next generation of computers. Where is the fastest computer in the world today? It is not in the U.S.A.; it is in China. We are trying to step ahead and make sure the next fastest computer that can be used to drive technology, invention, innovation, new companies, and new jobs is right here in America. Yet the House Republicans come up with devastating cuts on the national research labs such as Argonne. How can we justify it?

At the same time, they are cutting money to the National Institutes of Health. If there is one thing we all have in common, all of us—Republicans, Democrats, and Independents—it is our own vulnerability to illness and disease. That is a fact. When it happens, you want to make sure you or your loved ones are in the hands of the best doctor, the best hospital, with the best medicine and the best technology. We get that by investing in medical research.

What does the House Republican budget do? It cuts medical research. How could we possibly cut back on research for cancer, Alzheimer's, AIDS, and diabetes? How can we do that when so many Americans are afflicted and so many costs are associated with those diseases? It is so shortsighted, and it is an indication that when they came to write the budget, the House Republican leadership didn't focus thoughtfully on what we need to cut to reduce the deficit and what we need to invest in to build the economy. They put them all together and said it makes no difference. If you have government spending, it is not going to matter what it is.

Well, there are infrastructure projects—new roads, bridges, airports, and ports—that are essential for the growth of our economy.

The House Republicans stop many of those very important investments—including in Illinois, investments where we won in a national competition to modernize our rail system around Chicago, to make certain we have railroad service in parts of our State that currently don't, and to modernize and make safer the airports, highways, and that which is critically essential to our future.

I say to the Republican side, yes, the deficit is an issue. But first, understand we will never balance the budget with 15 million Americans out of work. We need to move this economy forward and tackle this budget in a responsible way, not just to cut one small part of it unmercifully but to put the entire budget on the table. That is what the deficit commission on which I served did. We need to do that in our Nation in a bipartisan fashion.

I am happy to continue to join my colleagues who will sit down and discuss this, including the Presiding Officer, Senator WARNER of Virginia. There are six of us—three Republicans and three Democrats. It is the most unlikely gathering of politicians that you can imagine in one room to try to come up with a solution. We are people of good will, and we know our historic responsibility. We are working through some of the hardest issues and questions any Member of Congress can face when it comes to this issue.

If we are successful—and I underline “if”—I hope we can move this country forward in a responsible way, putting the recession behind us and starting to get our house in order. We can no longer sustain a budget where we owe 40 cents for every dollar we spend. Whether you are on the left side of the spectrum, where I live politically, and value such things as help for education, help for the most vulnerable in America, or whether you are on the other side of the spectrum, which probably values national security issues and more investment in the military, both of us are in this together. We have to both understand there will not be enough money left for anything if we don't focus on doing this dramatic, historic job of coming up with a way to reduce our debt and our deficit.

Mr. President, I yield the floor 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.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BLUMENTHAL). Without objection, it is so ordered.

SPENDING CUTS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, thank you. I have a longer statement that I will give after we finish this colloquy.

At 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon, we met in the Vice President's office. It

was a very fine meeting. Vice President BIDEN was there. My friend, the Republican leader, me, the Speaker, and the minority leader of the House were there—McCONNELL, REID, BOEHNER, and PELOSI. We spent about an hour there.

The arrangement was that we would have a vote on H.R. 1 sometime next week and also a vote on the bill that we have just laid down, which is our alternative as to what we think should be done with the economy. I know our bill—because it is the way we have to do things here—is a long bill, and I am sure the minority wants to spend some time looking at that. But one way or the other we will either do it with an agreement or through my filing different procedural motions. We will get to a point next week where we will vote on H.R. 1, which we Democrats want to do. We will vote on the bill. Anyway, it has been here for a while. Whatever the number it is, it is a Democratic alternative, which Senator INOUE laid down.

We believe, and I am confident that the Speaker feels the same way, that we should vote on H.R. 1, which we have had calls for voting on for more than a week now. I have had statements from the press: Why doesn't REID set up a vote on H.R. 1? We will either do that with a unanimous consent agreement with my friend, the Republican leader, or we will do it through a procedural motion that I will file later today.

The amendment to that bill is No. 149, and that is Senator INOUE's. It cuts some \$51 billion from what the President's budget was.

To move the process forward, I think this is a place to start. We have some confidence that we will get votes on our bill, and we will move this matter forward. Regardless, if H.R. 1 does not pass—and it will not pass—and if ours does not pass, we at least know where we stand to move this ball down the road a little further.

The Speaker said that would allow the negotiations to start. I am paraphrasing, but that is about what he said. That is what all of us in the room decided to do yesterday.

Today I seek to set those two votes for Tuesday afternoon: one vote on passing H.R. 1, as it came over from the House, and after that we would have a vote on passing the alternative, which Chairman INOUE has drafted and is amendment No. 149. Once we get that, it would seem a fair proposition to move forward.

As I said, I know my friend, the Republican leader, has a scheduling problem. I understand that. I would have liked to have come in earlier today, and so would he, but we were not able to do that. I will give a more full explanatory statement in a few minutes.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS—H.R. 1

But right now, I ask unanimous consent that upon disposition of S. 23, which is the patent bill, the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 14, H.R. 1, the Defense appro-

priations long-term continuing resolution for fiscal year 2011; that Senator REID be recognized to offer a substitute amendment, the text of which is at the desk; that there be 4 hours of debate equally divided between the two leaders or their designees prior to a vote in relation to the substitute amendment; that upon disposition of the substitute amendment, the Senate proceed to vote on H.R. 1, as amended, if amended, with no intervening action or debate; that no motions or amendments be in order to the substitute amendment or to the bill prior to the votes; that the substitute amendment and the bill be subject to a 60-vote threshold; and that if H.R. 1, as amended, if amended, does not achieve 60 affirmative votes, it be returned to the calendar.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. McCONNELL. Reserving the right to object, and for the short term I am going to object today, we received this 350-page amendment at 11:45. We need a chance over the weekend to take a look at what our friends have offered. It could well be by Monday we will conclude this proposal the majority leader has laid out as the best way to go forward. We will continue to talk about that over the weekend. But for today I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that upon disposition of S. 23, the patent bill, the Senate proceed to H.R. 1, the Defense appropriations long-term continuing resolution for fiscal year 2011.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. McCONNELL. For the same reason, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

FULL-YEAR CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2011—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 14, H.R. 1.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to H.R. 1, an act making appropriations for the Department of Defense and the other departments and agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2011, and for other purposes.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. I have a cloture motion that is at the desk. I ask the clerk report the motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 14, H.R. 1, an act