

the alternative CBO scenario and what they deem most likely to occur without our action—we would spend \$7.63 trillion less than we are now spending. This is how it would work. There is a formula in here.

This is a 10-page bill. There are not a lot of “whereases” in this bill. It is just a business document, something the former Governor from New Hampshire might be accustomed to looking at. It is a business document that puts in place statutory limits that are formula driven to take us from here to there.

If we don't meet those requirements, then after 45 days—and there are targets each year of spending relative to our economy. By the way, this joins everybody at the hip in wanting our economy to grow because if our economy grows rapidly, those targets are much easier to hit. But if Congress doesn't act, if we don't have the courage to act, then there would be automatic sequestration on a pro rata basis, depending on the enumerator, what the size of that particular budget appropriation is relative to the overall budget. So on a pro rata basis, we would have sequestration that would take out those monies.

Now, none of us wants to see that happen, so that would force us to actually do what any Congress acting responsibly needs to do; that is, to actually work together each year to meet those requirements.

I have heard so many people recently, especially on the other side of the aisle, talking about focusing on discretionary spending only, basically cutting out some of those things that might make our country stronger. There are some things certainly in all of these bills, as the Senator from Nebraska was mentioning, where I might have differing priorities. But the fact is, when we try to do it all only on discretionary spending, we are not only not solving the problem but it prevents us from actually looking at some aspects that might otherwise make our economy grow.

Again, this bill, the CAP Act—with CLAIRE MCCASKILL signed on as an original cosponsor with me, and others are looking at it—would cause us to look at everything. So, again, first, a comprehensive look at spending relative to our economy at historical levels. Everything is on the table and on budget. Sequestration would be in place, and it would take a two-thirds vote of Congress to override these spending limits.

Again, I did not come here to message. I didn't come to move the bar beyond what the other side might be doing just to make a name for myself or create publicity. I came to solve our country's problems. I look at these young people in front of me, and I don't think they have any idea what our irresponsibility is doing to them. We talk about future generations, but I think all of us know we are actually at a point now where we have been so irresponsible that this is not just going

to affect future generations, it is getting ready to affect us.

There is a lot of turmoil in this world today. For that reason, the United States has been perceived as a safe haven. Our interest rates continue to be low because of the rest of the world's turmoil. The fact is, if and when—and we hope that when is soon—everything settles down, as people begin to again look closely at where we are as a country, and if we continue to not act responsibly and show the world we have the ability to at least put in place this framework that causes us to work together and get to the place we all know we need to get, then I fear interest rates, over time, are going to run from us, and that interest relative to our debt payments is going to continually consume more.

In closing, Madam President—and I appreciate the time—I have gone around the State of Tennessee and conducted 43 townhall meetings talking about this type of approach. I know numbers of Members on the other side of the aisle have talked about what they believe is an appropriate level of spending relative to our country's economy. I believe this bill is not out of line. I know this bill is at least appropriate. There are a number of people who think it should be lower, but this is something that would cause us to first agree on where we are going.

It is difficult for a body such as this, with 100 Senators and 435 House Members on the other side, to agree on little matters when we don't have any idea where it is we are trying to go. This would create a target for us. It would create a straitjacket for Congress. It would cause us to prioritize.

So I am going to continue talking about this until, hopefully, we pass it and actually have a process that causes us to work together in a constructive way.

With that, I yield the floor, and I thank the Chair for the time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

#### GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I rise to focus on another grave threat to our economic recovery and jobs: skyrocketing energy prices, and particularly the price of gasoline at the pump.

Madam President, I don't have to point out to Americans all over the country, and Louisianans all over my State, because they see it in front of them every time they go get a new tank of gas, the ever-increasing energy prices, the ever-increasing prices at the pump. Right now, on average, nationwide, the price at the pump is \$3.51 a gallon. That is about 80 cents higher than the average price a year ago. Most Americans know it is not stopping there. They see \$4 gasoline coming sooner rather than later, and who knows how far it will go beyond \$4 at the pump?

This is a real threat. We are trying to come out of the worst recession since

the Great Depression and this is an immediate threat to put the brakes on any recovery we may be mounting, and it is surely a real threat and a real hit to Louisiana and American families. It is a direct hit to their pocketbooks.

Louisianans, like all Americans, hear talking heads on TV, national economists, saying we don't have any real inflation. Listen, they are hit every time they go to the pump. They know there is inflation in key prices such as gasoline, and that is a big hit to their family budget.

This has sparked somewhat of a breakthrough in thinking among the ranks of the Obama administration. Let me explain what I mean by that. Recently President Obama's Energy Secretary, Secretary Chu, focused on supply and he said we need to increase supply to temper prices and mitigate the increasing price at the pump. He said we need to do this by convincing the Saudi Arabians to increase their supply of oil on the world market: “That's going to mitigate the price increase.” He said further, “We're hoping market forces will take care of this.” I at least give Secretary Chu and the Obama administration marks for this breakthrough understanding that supply is a big part of the equation. In fact, it is half of the supply and demand equation that yields price.

Recently the White House Chief of Staff Bill Daley made a comment that also went to supply. He said this weekend, on some of the weekend talk shows, that we need to consider opening the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to put more product on the market, to increase supply—also to temper prices, to stop these ever-increasing prices. Again, I at least give Mr. Daley and the Obama administration credit for finally realizing, and it is a bit of a breakthrough, that supply is a big part of the issue.

Where I disagree, where I want a further breakthrough, is that they need to focus on domestic supply we can create and that we can control in America. Unfortunately, they are not doing that yet.

I have come to the floor many times to talk about the virtual shutdown of the Gulf of Mexico to energy production since the BP disaster. I will mention that again because that is at the heart of this issue. The administration understands we need to increase supply. What about domestic supply? What about the Gulf of Mexico? What about all of our other vast energy resources that we are taking off the table and shutting down? What about that supply? That is the first place we should turn, that is the first action we should take. That is what can help us control our own destiny.

Instead, there has been a virtual shutdown of the Gulf of Mexico to energy production. That has reduced direct and indirect employment in the oil and gas and service industries. It threatens 93,000 jobs for every year until 2035 unless we reverse it. It could

reduce an additional 82,000 jobs every year through 2035 in non-oil and gas-related industries that are still impacted indirectly by this shutdown.

It reduces annual GDP by over \$20 billion a year, a cumulative impact of \$500 billion in the next 25 years, unless we immediately reverse course. It reduces long-term U.S. oil production by 27 percent. Long-term U.S. foreign oil imports are increased by 19 percent. Groppe, Long & Littell estimates—that is a consulting firm—show that over 23 wells per month are needed to maintain current production levels in the shallow water of the Gulf of Mexico. Since the moratorium was lifted on shallow water drilling, the formal moratorium, the administration has only approved permits for new wells at a pace of 1.8 per month—so 23 versus 1.8.

In deep water it is even worse. There has been one deepwater exploratory permit issued since the BP disaster and only one, in 9 months. As a result, six deepwater rigs have departed the gulf: Discovery America's Transocean has been moved to the Black Sea/Mediterranean. Ocean Baroness of Diamond Offshore, a semisubmersible rig, has been moved to Brazil. Ocean Confidence, also with Diamond, has been moved to West Africa. Ocean Endeavor, also with Diamond, has moved to the Black Sea area. Stena Drilling has moved major equipment to Eastern Canada. Transocean has moved some of their equipment to West Africa. According to ODS, another five major rigs are scheduled to leave the U.S. Gulf of Mexico by April 1. So that will put that 6 number up to 11. New well drilling has fallen from 20 in the first quarter of 2009 to 1 in the first quarter of 2010.

Again, I applaud the administration's realization that supply is a big part of the issue; that we need to increase supply in order to stop these skyrocketing prices which are hurting Louisianans and Americans every day. But let's focus on domestic supply. Let's focus on the Gulf of Mexico. Let's focus on things we can directly control—not just begging the Saudi Arabians to increase their production. I want to create jobs here, not just in Saudi Arabia. I want our children to be independent, to control their own future, not to have to beg some Saudi Arabian prince.

With regard to Mr. Daley's suggestion of opening the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, you know the Strategic Petroleum Reserve is just that. It is supposed to be strategic—for crises, for our security, our national security as a country. It is not the Salazar petroleum reserve to open, to cover up the complete ineptitude and foot dragging at the Interior Department in terms of issuing permits for our own drilling. So let's not play politics with the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, let's not treat it as the Salazar petroleum reserve, to cover up the mistakes and ineptitude and foot dragging of the Interior Department.

Let's increase domestic production, let's address the supply side of the

equation that way, aggressively, and create American jobs in the process. Louisianans are depending on that. Americans are depending on that—for jobs and to mitigate prices at the pump so we do not have these ever-increasing prices that could kill a recovery that we are hoping to mount and that could hurt every American's pocketbook, every American family's budget.

I urge all of my colleagues, Democrats and Republicans, to come together on this point and urge the administration to act. Yes, they are right, supply is key. Let's start with domestic action, domestic supply, and mitigate price increases that way.

I yield the floor.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I am going to proceed on my leader time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator may use his leader time.

#### THE BUDGET

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, first let me commend my friend and colleague from Louisiana on his observations about the need to increase domestic production. I think he certainly agrees with me we will be talking about this a lot more in the coming months as the price of gas at the pump continues to rise, and I thank him for his insight.

Sometime this week, Senators will have an opportunity to take a position on government spending on two bills the majority leader has predicted will fail. One is a serious effort to rein in wasteful Washington spending that has gotten completely and totally out of control. The other, by our Democratic friends, is a proposal so unserious that even its supporters have been forced to exaggerate its impacts—something they have been called out on by the press repeatedly. That proposal comes on the heels of an equally unserious proposal by the White House last week to cut \$6 billion from Federal spending for the entire year at a time when Washington is averaging about \$4 billion in deficit spending every day. Let me say that again. We are running a \$4 billion deficit every single day this year. Apparently Democratic leaders in Congress thought even that was too much to cut, because the bill they are proposing this week shaves it down to only about \$4.7 billion. So you had the administration last week saying they would go along with \$6.5 billion, and the proposal the Democrats in the Senate are going to lay before the Senate this week only reduces spending \$4.7 billion. That is about what we are engaged in spending, deficit spending, every single day. We are averaging about \$4 billion a day in debt this year and Democrats want to cut \$4.7 billion

and call it a day. That is their idea of getting serious.

Washington will add more to the debt this week than they want to cut for the entire year, and that is the farthest their leaders say they are willing to go. Anything more, they say, is Draconian. I will tell you what is Draconian. Draconian is what will happen if Democrats don't get real about our Nation's fiscal crisis.

Yesterday, the independent Congressional Budget Office issued a report that gave us a pretty good sense of the recklessness of Washington spending these days. Last month alone, the Federal Government spent \$223 billion more than it had—last month alone—the highest monthly deficit ever and the 29th straight month Washington has been in the red.

Here is the Democrats' proposal: Let's cut \$4.7 billion and call it a day; \$4.7 billion, even less than the President called for last week. Even that was ridiculed because of the preposterous claim that it met us halfway. It is time our friends on the other side stop trying to see what they can get away with and actually summon the courage to get our fiscal house in order, because here is the hard truth: Even the biggest cuts under discussion this week are puny compared to the fiscal problems we face in the area of entitlements. It is a pitched battle around here over \$4.7 billion when we have a \$14 trillion debt and more than \$50 trillion in entitlement promises that Washington cannot keep.

If Democrats cannot bring themselves to cut \$4.6 billion, how are we going to get a handle on the big stuff? This is just a dress rehearsal. Democrats are going to have to do a lot better than this if we stand a chance of getting our Nation's fiscal house in order.

Frankly, it is embarrassing. The American people deserve better. It is time for Democrats in Washington to face facts and, as I said yesterday, it is time for the President to get off the sidelines and lead because, with each passing day, it becomes clear that Democrats in Congress cannot bring themselves on their own to get serious about the problems we face. They don't even want to admit these problems exist.

I yield the floor.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I wanted to know, from a parliamentary standpoint, what time remains on the Republican side and when the Democrats' time begins.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 20½ minutes remaining on the Republican side.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, it is my understanding the Republicans have finished their time. I ask unanimous consent we start our hour at this point.

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