

education in our country—not only Head Start—but how it affects education generally is unacceptable.

What this bill would do if it were to pass—it is not numbers; it is not numbers only. What does it do to our port security? The Presiding Officer is from the State of New York. Every day there are evil people trying to do damage to the people and the State of New York in the ports. Our airport security. We still have to look out for these bad people, the shoe bombers and other people who come up with all of these very bad ways to try to harm America.

So for someone over here on the other side to say they are looking at H.R. 1 and they will probably all vote for it because of the numbers—how insulting to the American people.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 10:40 a.m. with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

AUTHORIZATION TO APPOINT ESCORT COMMITTEE

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the President pro tempore of the Senate be authorized to appoint a committee on the part of the Senate to join with a like committee on the part of the House of Representatives to escort the Honorable Julia Gillard, Prime Minister of Australia, to the House Chamber for the joint meeting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESPONSIBLE DEFICIT REDUCTION

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I wish to follow up on what was said by the majority leader. This exercise we are engaged in here, this conversation about how to finish this fiscal year which ends on October 1, is one that I think has gotten out of hand, and I will tell you why.

I know the debt is a serious problem facing America. I know the deficit is

something that threatens our economy and our way of living. I also know there are sensible, thoughtful ways to deal with it. One of them was addressed by the Bowles-Simpson deficit commission which I served on and voted for in terms of their final report. I disagreed with some things, but that is the nature of a compromise and the nature of moving our Nation forward. What we tried to do in that commission was to take a look at this challenge and not solve it in a month or 6 months, but say, How can we solve this, do it in a sensible, responsible way, and still grow the economy?

Right now, a few feet away from where we are meeting, are some of the best minds in America. They are sitting in a room, meeting with Senators. They represent the high-tech industries of America. I just heard Mr. John Chambers, who is the CEO of Cisco, talk about the challenge we face and compare our status in the world to China today, the No. 2 economy in the world. He compared our situation today to what it was a few years ago.

We are in a position now where we have only one out of four startup companies that we had a few years ago, and it is an indication to me that if America is going to continue to lead in this world, we need to invest in that which makes us strong. I am not saying the deficit is not a problem. It is. But we will still have a Federal budget as we address the deficit and we should invest, through that Federal budget, in what is important, things that build our future.

This morning Senator REID of Nevada talked about the vulnerable in America. Well, I couldn't agree more. We don't hear the words "safety net" around here anymore, and it is unfortunate, because we know that even in this prosperous society there are many unfortunate people. There are children who, through no fault of their own, were born into dysfunctional and poor families, kids whom we try to rescue from their plight and engage them in Head Start, to bring them into a learning atmosphere, a classroom. I have been there, all over my State of Illinois. I was there two weeks ago in Chicago. I went into one of the poorest sections of that great city and saw a room full of 40 of some of the cutest kids in the world from struggling families who were lucky enough to be in the Head Start Program. It means that for the better part of the day, they are in a safe, positive, learning environment. Is that a good thing? Of course it is. Whether it is my son or daughter or your son or daughter, it comes down to the basics. If we don't give our children the right lift-off in their lives, many of them struggle and, unfortunately, many fail.

So when the House Republicans say the way to deal with our deficit is to cut hundreds of thousands of these poor children out of the Head Start Program and to dismiss tens of thousands of teachers and staff, we have to

step back and say, Are you sure? Has it reached that point? Are we at a point now where we have to deny these children access to the kind of learning experience that makes their school experience later on more successful? I don't think so.

An honest look at our deficit would not just go after education and research and investment in our infrastructure. It would look across the board, as the Bowles-Simpson commission did. How can we rationalize at this moment in time cutting Head Start for hundreds of thousands of kids across America, denying money to the poorest school districts in America where they literally struggle day to day to try to turn around the lives of children who are in very dire circumstances?

The House Republicans have suggested cutting Pell grants. Pell grants. Those are the grants given to college students from lower income families. I look back on my life and I guess I was one of those kids. My mother was a widow and I wanted to go to college, and it wasn't a family experience. I needed help. In those days, Pell grants didn't exist, but college loans did, and the Federal college loan came to my rescue.

Well, here I stand today because of that. And for hundreds and thousands of students across America, the Pell grants are their ticket to college. That is how they can get into college, earn a diploma, and succeed in life. When the House Republicans say we have reached the point where we have to cut that assistance to college students across America, you say to yourself, Is it that bad that we have to reach that far?

Let me suggest there are other efforts we ought to look at first. I happen to believe in this great, prosperous Nation that the most prosperous among us—the wealthiest, the people who have benefited the most from this great Nation—can be asked to sacrifice more. I think they should. Asking those at the highest income levels in America to pay more in taxes at this point in our history is not unreasonable and it is not going to kill the economy, and it is simple economic justice. If doing that means we can protect the most vulnerable and protect opportunity for education, I think that is fair.

I also question some of what we are doing. Look at the price of gasoline at gas stations across America today and then watch the next quarterly earnings report of the oil companies and tell me why we continue to funnel billions of taxpayers' dollars into subsidies for the oil companies. They are doing quite well, thank you. They don't need a subsidy that adds to our deficit. The same thing is true in my home State of Illinois. Let me get personal about this. I happen to believe that agriculture is critical to our Nation. I believe we need to be there as a safety net for farmers who can't predict what the weather will be or what crop prices might be, but there are parts of our ag

program that, frankly, need to be seriously reviewed and the Federal contribution needs to be reduced. At a time when commodity prices are the highest and farms are the most prosperous and profitable, the fact that we are sending so much money out of the Treasury to some of the largest farms in America is indefensible.

So I am bringing it home to the agricultural State of Illinois and to our Nation when it comes to oil and gas and saying that before we cut money for research, as the House Republicans suggest, at the National Institutes of Health, before we deny to doctors and scientists and the best minds in America the resources they need to find cures for diseases, to find the next wonder drug that will revolutionize life in America—before we do that, let's take an honest look at this entire budget. The House Republican budget goes too far.

Let me also raise a point relative to my own appropriations subcommittee. We have funded three watchdog agencies to make sure we never, ever enter another recession like the one we are in now. After Wall Street brought the economy to its knees, sent millions of hard-working Americans to the unemployment line, and took \$700 billion from taxpayers—you will remember that \$700 billion in bailout funds—the House Republicans are now fighting to prevent the cops from getting on the beat, those who are going to be there to make sure Wall Street can never wreak this damage again.

The Securities and Exchange Commission was tasked by our Wall Street reform bill to write new rules to bring more transparency to the stock markets. The House Republican budget would cut \$231 billion from the Securities and Exchange Commission's budget compared to what the bill authorized. That is an 18-percent cut at the very time when this agency should be beefing up its ranks to keep an eye on what is happening on Wall Street and writing new rules for enforcement.

That may be good news for future Bernie Madoffs but not for investors and families across America who count on Wall Street and financial institutions across America to deal honestly.

The Commodity Futures Trading Commission was tasked by the same Wall Street bill to bring some sunshine to what Warren Buffet called "financial weapons of mass destruction, the credit default swaps and other derivatives that are mostly traded on shadow over-the-counter markets today.

The House Republican budget would cut \$174 million from the CFTC, compared to what the Senate Appropriations Committee recommended. That is a 69-percent cut, at the very moment when the CFTC needs better technology and many more investigators to handle its awesome responsibilities.

Then there is a third cut in the House Republican budget. They cut the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. It is brand new, created by the Wall

Street reform bill. The budget the House Republicans are pushing would cap the funding for the CFPB at half of what it should receive from the Federal Reserve under the Wall Street reform bill.

Since the day I introduced the first bill to create this bureau—in a different form but a similar goal—with the help of Elizabeth Warren, a professor from Harvard Law School, the House Republicans have fought to defeat this idea.

When President Obama signed the bill into law, the reformers—the people who want Americans to have access to financial services they understand to use to improve their lives—won.

As the chairman of the appropriations subcommittee with the responsibility for funding these agencies, I have done my best to make sure they have adequate funds to protect American investors and maintain the sterling reputation of our financial institutions on Wall Street.

As an early champion of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, I am going to continue that fight to make sure this agency has the power and resources it needs.

I will close by saying there is such a stark contrast in the vote that we will have today. We are going to be asked on the Senate floor whether Members want to vote for H.R. 1, the House Republican budget. The majority leader reminded us it is not just a spending bill; it is a bill that is fraught with every bumper sticker issue you can remember over the last 10 years.

The Republicans don't want to just cut spending, they want to inject themselves into the national debate on a myriad of issues. They want to take the spending bill and debate abortion, and they want to debate whether we will provide Federal funds for family planning, for Planned Parenthood across America. They want this spending bill to take funding away from National Public Radio and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. They want this spending bill to take one-third of the resources from the EPA, which needs to make sure the air we breathe and the water we drink are fit for ourselves and our families.

That is what they are doing. You think to yourself, if this is about an economic emergency and budget emergency, why did the House Republicans let it devolve into this situation where it has become a cat fight over political issues? We can do better. The American people expect us to do better. I am still meeting with five other Senators—three Republicans and two other Democrats. We are trying to take the Bowles-Simpson Commission and build this into a thoughtful effort that will reduce our deficit in a meaningful way. It will take time. We are not going to finish in 6 or 7 months or lurching 2 weeks at a time this Federal Government. We need to address our responsibilities—the responsibilities to build this economy and, No. 2, to put Amer-

ica's fiscal house in order. We can do that, but we need to get beyond the current level of political fighting into a more constructive level. I hope this bipartisan group I am part of will be part of the solution ultimately. In the meantime, we will continue our efforts.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam 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.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, our Nation's budget is a statement of our values, our priorities, and our vision for what kind of country we will be handing off to our children and grandchildren.

Working together to pass a responsible and forward-looking budget that works for the American people is one of the most important jobs we have in the Senate. The outcome of this process we are talking about will affect millions of families across our country, and the decisions we make this week are going to go a long way toward determining if our economy is going to continue moving in the right direction.

This morning I want to speak about two very different budgets being debated today, with two very different statements about what we should be focused on as a country, and two very different visions for how we need to be positioned to compete successfully and win the future.

This should not be a partisan process. I am still hopeful we can work together on a budget plan that cuts spending responsibly and works for the American people. But I am extremely disappointed that Republicans, who came into office talking about the economy, have proposed an extreme budget that would destroy hundreds of thousands of jobs, devastate workers and small businesses across the country, and threaten that fragile economic recovery.

I am disappointed that at a time when so many middle-class families still need support to get back on their feet after the Wall Street crisis Republicans have proposed a highly politicized slash-and-burn budget that will pull the rug out from families and children.

I am disappointed that while the Senate Democratic proposal makes responsible and practical budget cuts that will allow us to continue out-innovating, out-educating, and out-building our competitors, Republicans are proposing a budget that would hack away at these estimates across the board and threaten our Nation's ability to compete now and into the future.

We are going to hear a lot about big numbers today, and I will mention some myself. I think it is important we keep in mind that this debate is about

more than dollars and cents; it is about real people with real lives.

I recently heard from the South Central Workforce Development Council in Washington State, and they told me about a man they worked with named Damon.

Damon had been laid off from his job testing machine equipment. He held that job for almost 10 years. He and his wife had to move back in with his father, and he said that no matter how hard he tried he could not find work that matched his skills.

Damon had to do something about it. He went to his local one-stop career center and sat down with counselors who talked him through what local employers were looking for, and he decided he was going to learn computer networking. He studied hard and graduated from a local computer technology program. Despite this tough economy, he was able to work with the one-stop center to find a new job in a new field.

Damon was able to get back on his feet and support his family because of this program. He is not alone. Millions of Americans depend on workforce training programs to get the skills they need to get back to work and help our economy grow, including nearly 400,000 in my State of Washington.

House Republicans have proposed eliminating these critical programs and cutting off services for the workers who depend on them. At a time when so many workers are fighting to get back on the job, this would be devastating.

I recently met with a woman named Tiffany from Chehalis, WA. She told me her stepson, Rodney, had some difficult family circumstances and had fallen behind his peers and that she and her husband could not afford the private education they thought he needed to catch up. Then she heard about Head Start from a friend and enrolled Rodney in that program.

Tiffany told me she saw the difference within a few months. Just a short time later, Rodney was ready for kindergarten, and he is now the top reader in his first grade class. Tiffany and her family got the support they needed and they, too, are far from being alone.

Nearly 1 million families and their children depend on Head Start. The Republican proposal we will be voting on this afternoon eliminates services for 218,000 children, including more than 3,000 in my home State. It will close 16,000 classrooms across the country, and it will cause up to 55,000 teachers and staff to lose their jobs.

Again, this extreme slash-and-burn approach is wrong. It would hurt the most vulnerable of our children and families in our country and leave us at a competitive disadvantage in the future.

The Republican proposal also slashes community development block grants by 62 percent. That would eliminate services and decimate housing and eco-

nomic development programs in communities across our country.

It cuts the community health centers so many Americans depend on for their health care, eliminating funding outright for 127 clinics in 38 States, reducing services at over 1,000 centers nationwide, cutting off health care for almost 3 million Americans that will cause 5,000 workers across our country to lose their jobs.

Not only will the Republican proposal devastate middle-class families across this country, it would also halt the beginning of an economic recovery that our families and our small business owners desperately need to take root.

Last month, our economy added over 200,000 private sector jobs, and the unemployment rate fell to the lowest level in 2 years.

We have a long way to go, but I am confident that we have turned the corner and are beginning to move in the right direction. Economists on both the left and the right have come out and said if the Republican proposal from the House were to pass, the economic recovery and millions of jobs across the country would be threatened.

In fact, one independent analysis said the Republican plan could destroy up to 700,000 American jobs in this country, including an estimated 15,000 in my State of Washington. That would be devastating, and we cannot afford to let that happen.

That is why the Senate Democratic proposal would take our country in a very different direction. It would cut spending—billions of dollars, in fact—but it would do so in a responsible and practical way that would protect our middle-class families, those who need it most.

Our proposal continues to make the investments we need as a country to compete and win in the 21st-century economy. Take the highly successful TIGER Program that I helped create. Communities across our country have been competing very hard for resources from this program so they can invest in transportation projects that make significant contributions to the Nation, to their region, or their metropolitan area.

Today, the TIGER Program is putting workers on the job and helping to lay down a strong foundation for economic growth in this country. But the Republican proposal would not only eliminate that program completely and slam the door on communities that want to invest in their infrastructure, it would also take back every penny of funding—all funding already—promised in last year's budget. That will halt 75 projects in 40 States that are ready to go and put 33,000 jobs at risk. It doesn't make any sense. The Democratic proposal would protect that critical investment.

The Republican proposal would also jeopardize public health and the environment by gutting the laws that keep

our air and water clean. It cuts nearly \$2 billion in funding for clean water infrastructure, which our local communities need to keep our families safe, so when you turn on that water in your kitchen you will know it is safe. It slashes the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which, by the way, uses revenue from offshore oil leases to protect some of the most treasured places in our country. But that is not all. The extreme Republican proposal would also slash investments for students and children, including a \$700 million cut to title I funding, which will affect 2,400 schools serving over 1 million students. It cuts Pell grants by 15 percent, which will make it so much harder for kids to go to college today.

The House Republican proposal would even slash some of the bipartisan programs we have created to keep our families safe, including 66 percent cuts to both the Transit Security Grant Program that helps make sure our trains and subways are safe, as well as the Port Security Grant Program that helps protect our critical economic and national security assets across the country. That does not make sense. If a terrorist attack were to occur at one of our ports or transit systems, it would be absolutely devastating for our families and our economy, which is why the Democratic proposal protects these critical investments.

Those are just a few of the examples of the radical and irresponsible cuts that are proposed in the Republican budget.

We, of course, need to cut spending. We need to bring down the deficit. We all agree on that point. But we have to do it responsibly, and we cannot do it on the backs of our middle-class families who are struggling.

I urge my colleagues this afternoon to support the Democratic proposal, and if we cannot pass something today, I urge my Republican colleagues to come to the table and work with us to pass a responsible long-term budget that really does reflect our priorities, gets our workers back on the job, and invests in America's future.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING AND FREE-TRADE AGREEMENTS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, later today Senators will have an opportunity to take a position on government spending. At a time when Washington is borrowing about \$4 billion a day, Democratic leaders want to cut about \$4.5 billion in government spending for the rest of this fiscal year and call it a day. In other words, they want to take what amounts to a day-and-a-