

Let's say we pass a cap-and-trade either by regulation or legislation. What do you think that is going to do in terms of the overall emissions of CO₂?

Her response was, well, it wouldn't really affect them because that would only affect the United States.

I go on further and say: If we were to restrict these, and stop us from producing oil, gas, and coal in the United States, necessarily our power would be reduced. That would move it to China, to India, to Mexico, to places where they do not have these regulations and do not have restrictions on emissions. It would have the effect of actually increasing, not decreasing, CO₂. Even if we are wrong on that we have to keep in mind it would not make any difference.

I know there are several others who want to talk about this. I am very excited we now have this as a pending amendment, to adopt what I refer to as the Inhofe-Upton bill. He referred to it as the Upton-Inhofe bill. It would merely take out the jurisdiction of the EPA to regulate CO₂.

I would say also in the case of the Director, Lisa Jackson, when I asked the question—and this was a year ago in October, I say to my good friend from Louisiana—I said: If you are going to try to have an endangerment finding so that would allow the EPA to regulate the same as the cap-and-trade would, it has to be based on science. What science would you base it on? Her response was the United Nations IPCC. What is that? It was Climategate IPC. It happened about a year ago. It was cooked science. I remember standing at this podium in this Senate many times, talking about how they have tried to falsify the science to make people believe catastrophic global warming is going to come in as a result of CO₂ emissions.

I am glad this has come up. Right now we are looking at gasoline approaching \$4 a gallon. It is a supply-and-demand situation. My friend from Louisiana has a lot of gas and oil in her State. We do in my State of Oklahoma. We need to get the regulators, who are the politicians, to allow us to go ahead and exploit our own resources. Eighty-three percent right now of the Federal lands where we could be producing oil and gas is off limits.

The last thing I will say before yielding the floor is that if we were to take the recoverable oil and the recoverable gas and take away the political obstacles that are in the way, we would have enough to run this country for 90 years, in terms of the supply of oil, and for 90 years in the supply of gas, all produced here in the United States. That would mean we would not have to be reliant upon the Middle East to run this machine called America.

Let's pull away those. The way to do that is to vote in favor of this amendment and I am very excited we will have the opportunity to do that shortly.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. The Senator and Senator MCCONNELL have an amendment. There is an amendment pending. We only have a minute and a half. I wish to call to the attention of the Chair, Senator VITTER has an amendment which we will take up to discuss later this afternoon.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

AMENDMENT NO. 178

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I want to briefly preview an amendment, Vitter amendment No. 178, which I will formally call up this afternoon about 2:45. This is a spending amendment to get back to what I believe is the central challenge we face as a country right now, this unsustainable path we are on with regard to Federal spending and debt. This is a very simple, straightforward amendment which I think deserves and will hopefully get strong bipartisan support. It requires the Federal Government to get rid of its billions of dollars of inventory—literally billions and billions of dollars of unutilized or underutilized real property.

The Federal Real Property Council reports that the Federal Government owned or operated more than 1.1 million assets worldwide in 2007. It was worth an estimated \$1.5 trillion. But a lot of those assets, real property buildings, land, are unused or underused. According to OMB, there are about 47,000 underutilized properties, almost 19,000 completely unutilized properties. That is over 65,000 properties with an estimated value of \$83 billion that would better be diminished, sold, or demolished.

This is a commonsense way to save money in the Federal budget, to move us forward in terms of a more sustainable path on spending and debt. Obviously we need many more larger steps, but this is brought in that spirit.

I look forward to returning to the floor around 2:45 to make it formally pending and to offer some brief additional comments.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, according to the agreement, we are going to break now at 12:30 and take up this debate this afternoon and stay on this bill with open debate. Hopefully, it can be productive and cordial and then, hopefully, we can move to pass this important bill, the reauthorization of SBIR.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order with respect to Senator PORTMAN be vitiated.

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

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, we will break now and come back and resume our debate at 2:15.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, at 12:30 p.m., the Senate recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. WEBB).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

FISCAL DISCIPLINE

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, returning to the Senate is in many ways like having a chance to relive part of one's life; yet doing so with the benefit of experience, experience that I gained in serving in this body before and also from service in the private sector. It allows one to see things differently than before.

While I can discuss with my colleagues many things that remain the same in the Senate, there is also much that has changed in our country that requires change in this institution. It is what has changed that has brought me back to the Senate. The more I witnessed what was happening to our country, the more I realized that I, like many others across the country, needed to reengage in some way or another in the task of returning our country to its basic values and time-tested principles, not the least of which is returning our Federal Government to one that ensures a healthy fiscal nation whose finances and policies promote job opportunities for its citizens.

I could not get comfortable with the fact that my generation might be the first to leave a country to our children that is in worse fiscal shape and with less opportunity than the one we had the privilege of inheriting.

When I first came to Congress in 1981, one of the first votes I had to deal with was to raise the national debt limit to just over the \$1 trillion mark. It was a tough one. Think of that. For nearly 200 years, as our country prospered and grew financially, we spent ourselves into \$1 trillion worth of debt. As a newly elected Member of the House of Representatives at that time, the last thing I wanted to do, particularly having run on a campaign of limited government and trimming the size of government and spending, was to make one of my very first votes on raising the national debt to accommodate excessive spending. But gritting my teeth and swallowing hard, I followed the request of newly elected President Ronald Reagan, who said we need to pay past bills so we can get to the job of cutting spending and cutting taxes and getting our country back on the right track economically.

It is difficult for me to comprehend that I am standing here 30 years later, and we are looking at a national debt of over \$14.5 trillion. So in just 30 years we have gone from \$1 trillion to \$14.5 trillion. I cannot comprehend that number. Very few Americans can comprehend that number. But, clearly, one thing stands out; that is, this Federal Government has grown faster and much deeper in debt than any of us could have imagined over a very short

period. We will pay a steep price tag for that debt. It threatens our way of life, as well as our Nation's security.

During the 1990s, the combination of economic growth and defeat of the 1993 health care plan, President Clinton's decision to move to the middle and support welfare reform—all contributed to moving us toward a more sensible and fiscally responsible balance between revenue and spending. In fact, in 1998, we actually reached a surplus of about \$69 billion, the first surplus reached since the year 1969. That would have been the ideal time to lock in a balanced budget amendment to ensure we would not slip back into deficit spending and that Congress and the White House would be held accountable for future spending. There were two serious attempts during the 1990s, both of which I supported, to enact a balanced budget amendment. They failed, each one, by one vote. Think today where we would be fiscally had we gotten that one vote and passed either of those amendments and sent it to the States for ratification, which I am sure they would have done. We would not be facing the dire situation we face today.

I have decided not to go into the details of our exploding deficit and debt. Much has already been said and published in that regard. Much has been said on this floor, and more will be said. Based on the last election, the American public is now much better informed of our current financial situation and the dangerous consequences of unchecked spending. We have spent beyond our means in all areas of government. We have increased unfunded liabilities, and we have committed to programs which we cannot afford or sustain. Americans have heard the warnings of many who have analyzed the situation and sounded the alarm.

In 2010, they said immediate action must be taken to avoid a national fiscal crisis of unprecedented negative consequences. What are those consequences? Ultimately, those consequences include a lower standard of living, less income for families to take home to pay the mortgage, to buy that new car, to save and send their children to school. Those consequences have, unfortunately, over the past couple of years put our Nation in a serious unemployment situation. People are out of work, and they have been out of work for months if not years. Ultimately, it all turns back to jobs.

Having the ability to bring home earnings that will sustain a family and provide opportunities for education, health, growth for those families, and give our children and grandchildren and all those who follow the opportunities so many of us have enjoyed—those are the consequences we face if we don't today address these problems.

Many respected economists and financial experts have continued to issue dire warnings about our current fiscal condition. Let me quote a few.

Erskine Bowles, former Chief of Staff to President Clinton and cochair of the

President's deficit reduction committee, said:

This debt is like a cancer [that] will destroy the country from within [unless Washington acts].

Pete Peterson, former U.S. Secretary of Commerce and finance executive, said about the national debt:

We need to ask ourselves, not just is this sustainable, but is it moral? What does it mean to burden our kids to an unconscionable doubling of their taxes?

Admiral Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said:

I believe our debt is the greatest threat to our national security. If we as a country do not address our fiscal imbalances in the near term, our national power will erode, and the costs to our ability to maintain and sustain influence could be great.

Finally, former U.S. Comptroller General David Walker, who served under both Republican and Democratic administrations, said:

What threatens the ship are large, known and growing structural deficits . . . Habitually spending more money than you make is irresponsible.

But that is exactly what Washington has done, habitually spend, sinking our fiscal ship deeper and deeper each year.

We saw a drastic swing in November: Hoosiers and Americans united in a common purpose to demand that our newly elected representatives and all representatives repair our fiscal health that has been destroyed by excessive tax-and-spend policies. They called for a change in course. They called for bold action today to preserve our country for tomorrow. They realized that the stakes are too high to ignore or delay addressing our fiscal challenges. Hoosier families and businesses, local communities, States, and virtually every other entity across Indiana and the country have had to make sacrifices to trim their budgets. They are now calling for the Federal Government and Congress to do the same.

We cannot succeed unless we together, Republicans and Democrats, agree that addressing our current fiscal crisis requires political courage and bold action from both parties, both Chambers of Congress, and President Obama.

I wish to offer what I think are some solutions I believe Congress must execute, perhaps, in a coordinated way, essential steps if we are serious about addressing the fiscal challenge before us.

First, stop the fiscal bleeding and avoid economic distress by doing so. Washington has to break its spending and borrowing addiction. Like curing any bad habit, it will take discipline and commitment. As we consider spending cuts and ways we can reverse the growth of government, I believe everything must be on the table. All functions of government should be examined, including mandatory spending and defense spending. Serious discussions and proposals are currently underway in this Congress. I am participating in many of them. These proposals need to be considered carefully. They need to be debated and voted on.

Secondly, it is important we recognize that spending cuts alone will not solve our fiscal challenges and preserve our future. We need to pair our cuts with a pro-growth agenda that puts Hoosiers and Americans back to work. One of the ways Congress can achieve this goal is by reforming the Tax Code. By lowering marginal rates, by lowering corporate rates to make us more competitive with our competitors around the world, by eliminating exclusions and special introductions and credits and simplifying the complex and convoluted Tax Code, Congress can help advance the economic recovery. This is a necessary element in the task of returning to fiscal health. I currently am working on legislation on this very topic and hope to introduce it in the coming weeks.

Third, Washington needs to examine, reduce and, in many cases, eliminate harmful regulations and mandates. As I have traveled across Indiana, perhaps one story I have heard over and over from every business with which I engage is, regulations coming out of Washington, many of which do not reflect the will of the people, the will of Congress but are imposed by non-elected bureaucrats, have put us at a disadvantage with our competitors, have added additional burdens of paperwork and compliance that don't make sense from a health and safety standpoint.

Oversight and proposals to address the regulatory burdens also need to be considered, debated, and voted on by this Congress.

Fourth, I think we need to promote trade policies. Six thousand businesses in Indiana export overseas. One-fourth of all of our manufacturing jobs result from exports. A good first step in this process is to open our markets by approving the three pending trade agreements we have: Korea, Colombia, and Panama. This will increase job opportunities at home and put us on the path of continuing open trading that provides so many jobs to so many Americans.

Having said all this, the greatest threat to our fiscal security is the growing and unsustainable mandatory spending. We cannot strengthen our country's financial health without addressing Medicare and Medicaid and Social Security. These programs along with the interest on the national debt consume nearly two-thirds of the Federal budget. While we hear a lot of talk about the necessity of tackling entitlement spending, little action occurs because it is often considered too politically dangerous. However, I believe we no longer have a choice. We no longer can defer addressing these problems until after the next election. The entitlement crisis is before us and has been growing for several years.

We know about the coming baby boom generation that is retiring and the impact that will put on entitlement programs. We have to commit to finding a way to restructure these programs and make them solvent.

Let me repeat that. We are not here to undercut these programs; we are here to preserve them. We are here to make the necessary structural, long-term incremental changes so those benefits will be there for people when they retire.

As Winston Churchill once said:

One ought never to turn one's back on a threatened danger and try to run away from it. If you do that, you will double the danger. But if you meet it promptly and without flinching, you will reduce the danger [at least] by half.

We have not met this promptly. But I believe it is not too late to begin the process of making commonsense adjustments to the current systems. Modest incremental changes now will help us avoid much more drastic and painful changes later.

In 1983, Congress was faced with a serious Social Security crisis. We were months away from having checks not sent out. Together, President Reagan, Tip O'Neill, majority and minority members of the Senate and the House, and the political leaders of the respective parties gathered together and decided to put this issue and the solution to this issue above politics, and they did so. It was a difficult debate and discussion, but we made the changes that were implemented on an incremental basis.

Social Security bought 30 years of solvency on the basis of that decision. The sky did not fall. The economy did not collapse. And the people, when they learned why we were doing what we were doing—to preserve the program, not leave it in a dire situation where benefits would have to be cut or reduced dramatically—they backed what we did and supported it.

I believe we are in that position now with our entitlements. So if we can propose sensible, modest changes that will save these programs, I think the public will gladly support them.

Over the last decade, we have watched the storm clouds gather, and we have watched as those fiscal clouds have drawn ever closer and become ever darker. They are now bearing down upon us, and alarms are sounding louder than ever. As I have said, it is incumbent upon each of us in this Congress to acknowledge that the storm is here and to do all we can to mitigate the damage.

But given the current division of authority in our Congress and executive branch, it is incumbent upon the two Chambers and the two parties to set aside the politics of 2012 for the sake of the future of our Nation. I believe the voters will respond favorably to that decision.

However, no matter what we do as elected representatives, we cannot ultimately succeed without the engagement and the support and the leadership of the President of the United States. We know the President understands the gravity of the fiscal crisis. As a former Senator, as a Presidential candidate, and now as Commander in

Chief, he has clearly articulated his understanding of the issue.

In 2006, then-Senator Obama said:

Increasing America's debt weakens us domestically and internationally. Leadership means that the "buck stops here." Instead, Washington is shifting the burden of bad choices today onto the backs of our children and grandchildren. America has a debt problem and a failure of leadership.

Those are the words of former Senator Barack Obama, now President of the United States.

As a candidate for President, in 2008, Presidential candidate Barack Obama said:

We're going to have to take on entitlements and I think we've got to do it quickly.

And in 2009, President Obama said:

What we have done is kicked this can down the road. We are now at the end of the road and are not in a position to kick it any further.

He also promised his administration would "work with Congress to execute serious entitlement reform."

President Obama, as both Republicans and more and more Democratic Members of Congress are committing to go forward—and as Republican and Democratic Governors of States in fiscal peril are responding—our Nation, Mr. President needs you now to assume the primary leadership role in helping us avert these financial problems and potential financial meltdown.

The 2012 election must be subordinate to the urgency and the challenge before us. We cannot afford to wait until 2013 to begin the necessary work to prevent a fiscal disaster. We need Presidential leadership now. Our country's future is at stake.

Given the immensity of our fiscal challenges we face today, some would say it is too late to remedy the problem. I do not hold that view. And I do not hold that view primarily because of our Nation's history in rising to the challenge that faces us. From the Founding Fathers to George Washington, from Abraham Lincoln to Roosevelt and Reagan, times of trial and crisis have always produced moments of great leadership and the response of the American people to support that leadership.

That is what Americans are yearning for today: leadership—leadership to guide us out of this dangerous financial hole that threatens our Nation's security and future.

So I ask our President—as other Presidents throughout our history have done in times of major threats—Mr. President, grant us your leadership. Grant us the leadership needed to restore the strength and prosperity that has been the American story and has allowed our Nation to be the defenders and protectors of democracy and freedom.

Thirty years ago, Ronald Reagan delivered his first inaugural address, and expressed the urgent need to rein in spending and curb the size and growth of the Federal Government. He said doing so will require "our best effort,

and our willingness to believe in ourselves and to believe in our capacity to perform great deeds; to believe that together, with God's help, we can and will resolve the problems which now confront us."

For each of us serving here today, I believe it is our duty to rise to the immediate challenge and "resolve the problems which now confront us." It will take all of us uniting behind a common purpose—that above all else, we must first restore and strengthen our fiscal security. We must articulate a clear vision, set specific goals, and make the tough decisions needed to bring our Nation out of debt and preserve prosperity and opportunity for future generations.

I am here today to commit to Hoo-siers, to my colleagues, to my children and grandchildren, to all our Nation's children and grandchildren, that I will not turn my back on our economic dangers or seek the false safety of political denial.

I am standing here today to find solutions, to make the hard decisions, and to leave behind a country that is stronger and more fiscally secure for future generations.

This crisis is not insurmountable. We can overcome it by doing what great generations before us have done: mustering our will to do what is right. If we do, I know that America's greatest days are not behind us but still lie ahead.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

CONGRATULATING SENATOR COATS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, not often in life does someone get a second opportunity to make a good first impression. The Senator from Indiana has had a chance to make two maiden speeches in the Senate. I confess I was not there for the first one, but I am pleased to have been here for the second, and I want to commend him for his extraordinary speech, particularly his emphasis on the importance of the President of the United States leading on the issue of entitlement reform.

We all know that under the Constitution only the President's signature can make a law. I think what the Senator from Indiana has pointed out, and many others have pointed out, is that on the issue of entitlement reform—the over \$50 trillion of unfunded liabilities we have lying out there ahead of us; promises we have made we cannot keep—this cannot be done without Presidential leadership and a Presidential signature. I thank the Senator from Indiana for reminding us all of that. We all still hope the President will step up and help us meet this enormous challenge. I commend the Senator from Indiana for a wonderful first impression.