

a retirement savings account, an RSA, to work toward purchasing their American dream.

Right now the U.S. corporate income tax rate is the second highest in the world. That puts American corporations at a competitive disadvantage globally. To resolve that, the Wyden-Coats-Begich legislation cuts the top corporate rate from 35 percent to 24 percent. That means American corporations will pay a more competitive rate than corporations based in trading partner countries such as Canada, Germany, and France.

To make the Tax Code fairer and reduce opportunities for individuals and businesses to avoid paying their fair share of taxes, the Wyden-Coats-Begich bill ends a number of specialized tax breaks that favor one business sector or some special interest that has been fortunate to be here lobbying in years past and getting their special deals, making sure everyone is treated fairly but ensuring we are competitive in the global economy in which we now compete.

Our legislation protects and extends important tax deductions for families. The Wyden-Coats-Begich bill retains many of the most commonly claimed individual tax credits and deductions, including deductions for mortgage interest and charitable contributions, credits for children and earned income. Preferences for the Armed Forces, veterans, and the elderly and the disabled will be retained, as will those that help Americans pay for health care and higher education and save for retirement.

The Wyden-Coats-Begich bill also permanently extends the enhancements of the Child tax credit, the earned-income tax credit, and the dependent care credit. The legislation eliminates the current law phaseout of itemized deductions and personal exemptions, allowing all taxpayers to benefit fully from their deductions and exemptions.

Finally, our legislation requires banks to identify all individuals who benefit from foreign accounts by name and nationality and to withhold 30 percent of all passive income, such as interest on capital gains, sent to any individual who disguises his or her identity.

Tax reform is a bipartisan issue, hands down. Republicans, Democrats, our President, the OMB Director, and many others all across this country have called for it. So let's do it. Let's stop punching holes in an outdated system and make real tax reform happen. Tax reform is about creating jobs, growing the economy, and supporting our families and businesses for the future.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant majority leader is recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I commend my colleague from Alaska. I do not know the particulars of his bill, but as I listened to his description of

it, it is long overdue. Simplifying this Tax Code so the average American believes it is fair and understandable is essential for the integrity of our tax system.

I have always said there is one law we can pass which would result in tax simplification overnight, and that would be a requirement that every Member of the Senate and House prepare and file their personal income tax returns. It is a humbling experience. A few years ago, in Springfield, IL, when my accountant passed away, I decided, as a lawyer and a Senator: I will do it myself. I spent the whole Sunday afternoon, and then Monday went begging for help. I thought to myself: Mine is not that complicated. It should be a system that is much simpler and more direct and fair.

I thank the Senator for stepping in to meet that challenge. The Bowles-Simpson Commission talked about tax reform as one of the central elements to dealing with our deficit and expanding our economy. I think I might add to that: fairness in the way our taxes are treated. So I thank the Senator for his leadership on that issue.

Mr. BEGICH. I thank the Senator.

BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, we are now in the countdown phase as to whether this government of the United States of America—the most prosperous Nation in the world—is going to shut down, turn out the lights, close its doors, and walk away. That could happen tomorrow night at midnight. If it does, it is an unmitigated disaster. There is no winner. No political party can claim they come out ahead in this exercise. It makes us all look bad—deservedly so.

So this morning I called into a local radio station in downstate Illinois, and the host said: You ought to hear the phone calls, Senator.

I said: I can guess what they are saying. What is wrong with those people in Washington that they can't sit down and reach an agreement? They are supposed to be our leaders. They are supposed to work out our problems. They are not supposed to throw up their hands and throw a tantrum.

That is, frankly, what will happen if we close down this government. Now, I think there are ways for us to reach an agreement. There are certain issues on which we all agree. Let me tell you what they are.

Our deficit and debt are serious national problems. They threaten our future, and they leave a legacy to our children and grandchildren we cannot defend. In order to reduce our deficit and our debt, we need to change in Washington. We need to cut spending, we need to be honest about it, and we need to tell the American people, whom we represent, what it means. Some of it will require sacrifice, but on both sides of the aisle there is no argument over what I just said. We need to

cut spending, and we need to reorder the priorities of government.

But there is something more we need to do, and I credit two Minnesota legislators who wrote a letter to the New York Times a few weeks ago, who, I thought, in a few words put it together. This Democrat and Republican wrote in and said: We are facing a fiscal crisis in our State, and what we have discovered is, we can't tax our way out of it. We can't cut our way out of it. We need to think our way out of it. We need to find ways to deliver essential services to the American people in a more cost-efficient way. We need to stop the duplication, waste, and inefficiency that are clearly part of our government today.

So where are we? We are involved in negotiations, primarily between the majority leader, HARRY REID of Nevada, and Speaker JOHN BOEHNER of Ohio. They are trying to work out an agreement so we can move forward and finish this year's funding. It is 6 months and a few days, but it is critically important we get it done. They are close. In fact, I would say—and I just asked Senator REID if this was a fair representation—the dollar amount of this negotiation is all but completed. The dollar amount is all but completed, meaning that both sides have agreed how much we will cut spending for the remainder of this year.

To give credit where it is due, to Speaker BOEHNER and the House Republicans, there are significant cuts in their initiative in this area they can point to as part of the agreement. On the other side of the ledger, I think at the end of the day we will be able to say, as Democrats: Yes, we supported spending cuts, but we drew the line where we thought it was important for the future of this country. We made sure the cuts were not too deep in job training programs for unemployed and new workers in America. We made certain the cuts were not too deep when it came to education, particularly for children from low- and middle-income families. We made certain the cuts were not too deep when it came to medical research and the basic competitive research necessary for the American economy and businesses to expand—and a host of other things. But those three major areas of job creation, education, and research we fought for, and at the end of the day I think we can point with pride to the fact that most of those are going to be largely protected.

So we can both walk out of the room with some satisfaction that after all of this time, we have reached the point where the dollar amounts are in basic agreement—I am not going to say in total agreement but in basic agreement.

So why am I not standing here saying with certainty that the government will not shut down? Unfortunately, now the House Republicans have decided this is no longer a battle over the

budget deficit; it is a battle over issues—issues that do not relate directly to the spending of our government or the size of our deficit.

One of the things they are insisting on is a group of riders that are part of H.R. 1, their budget bill, which restrict the authority of the Environmental Protection Agency in Washington to deal with environmental issues.

I totally disagree with the House Republican position on this, and they are insisting on it. I would commend to them to pick up that always scintillating volume, the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, from yesterday and read what happened on the Senate floor. Yesterday, on the Senate floor the Democratic majority agreed with the Republican minority, and we called four amendments on the EPA. In fact, we said to the Republican leader, Senator MCCONNELL: Write your own amendment. We will call it to the floor, and we will vote on it. It was a sweeping amendment which took the authority away from the EPA when it came to greenhouse gas emissions. I think that is the wrong position, but Senator MCCONNELL had his right to offer it.

He got 50 votes in favor, 50 votes against. It failed, but we had the debate. We are not ducking this issue, I say to Speaker BOEHNER. We have faced it. We have voted on it. This Chamber has spoken on that issue and had three other debates and votes yesterday on EPA. None of those proposals got more than a dozen votes, but we have had the debate. We are not running away from it.

So to insist now, as part of any budget agreement, we accept the House position on the EPA is to ignore the obvious. The Senate has spoken. The Senate has debated and voted, and it is clear where we stand.

The second issue Speaker BOEHNER insists has to be part of this package is one that troubles me because it goes to the heart of some basic health programs for people across America. It is the title X family planning program.

Speaker BOEHNER's approach would eliminate the entire title X family planning program. How big an expense is this? Mr. President, it is \$327 million.

Since 1970, title X funding has provided men and women in every State with basic primary and secondary health care, including annual exams, cancer screenings, family planning, and testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections. In 2009, title X-funded providers performed 2.2 million pap tests, 2.3 million breast exams, and over 6 million tests for infections, including HIV. Title X services prevent nearly 1 million unintended, unplanned pregnancies each year, almost half of which would otherwise end up in an abortion.

Family planning programs such as title X not only give men and women command over their lives, they save us money. Every public dollar invested in family planning saves us almost \$4—

\$3.74 to be exact—in Medicaid-related expenses. If we ended title X, as Speaker BOEHNER and the House Republicans insist, it would result in more unintended pregnancies and, sadly, more abortions, and it would result in more than 5 million women losing access to basic primary and preventive health care.

We are prepared to debate this. If the House Republican position is that we need to close these clinics across America and we need to eliminate access to basic primary health care to literally millions of women and men across America, I am ready for the debate. But to hold up this budget negotiation, to insist that unless the House Republican position of eliminating title X is accepted, we can't reach an agreement—we have to shut down the government? Does Speaker BOEHNER really propose we shut down the government of the United States of America unless we are willing to cut title X family planning programs and health clinics and close the doors of health clinics across America? Is that what the last election was about? I don't think so. I think the American people said in the last election: Get serious about the deficit and start working together and stop your squabbling. Those were the two basic messages I took out of it. Well, we are getting serious about the deficit because we are nearly in full agreement on the dollar cuts necessary for the remainder of this year.

I don't remember the last election being a referendum on whether poor people and children in America would have access to health care at title X clinics. H.R. 1 included an amendment from a Congressman from Indiana that barred Planned Parenthood from receiving any Federal funding, including Medicaid reimbursements, CDC grants, and teen pregnancy prevention program funding. Planned Parenthood health centers provide comprehensive care to millions of low-income and uninsured individuals each year. Forty-eight percent—1.4 million—of their patients are on Medicaid and would lose access to their primary care.

This provision is presented as a means to prevent Planned Parenthood from using Federal funds for abortion. However, Federal law already prohibits the use of Federal dollars for abortion—that is not the issue—except, under the Hyde amendment, which goes back decades now, in cases of rape, incest, or if the life of the mother is threatened by the pregnancy.

Abortion counseling represents 3 percent of Planned Parenthood's services. Yet this amendment, this rider from Congressman PENCE, would ignore that. Ninety percent of the care provided at Planned Parenthood is preventive care—cervical and breast cancer screening, family planning, sex education, and the treatment of infection.

If this amendment were enacted, most of the 800 health centers in the United States and 23 centers in Illinois, including in my hometown of Springfield, would be forced to close.

This prohibition on Planned Parenthood funding is a rider on the House budget bill that is now the stumbling block for an agreement on deficit reduction for the remainder of the year and keeping the government open. It is ridiculous that Planned Parenthood, which receives title X funding, should be such a target and should be an obstacle to an agreement.

We understand the conscience clause restrictions that are in the law when it comes to the issue of abortion. That is not what this is about. This is about family planning. And those of us who personally oppose abortion believe women should be given the information and opportunity to take care of themselves and make their own family decisions. That is what Planned Parenthood is about. This amendment would close down those clinics across America. I believe that is a move in the wrong direction.

We can work together, and we should, to deal with this budget deficit.

PAUL RYAN is a Congressman from Janesville, WI. I know him. I like him. We worked together for almost a year on the deficit commission. He is a bright, hard-working young man and chairman of the House Budget Committee. He has proposed a plan for the budget for the next 5 to 10 years. It is not a plan I agree with, but I respect the fact that he put the time in to prepare it. The reason I don't agree with it is that, unlike the Bowles-Simpson commission, the budget plan Congressman RYAN has proposed does not really deal in a comprehensive and fair fashion with the challenge of the deficit. Here is what I think and the commission believed: If we are serious about the deficit, we need to put everything on the table—everything.

What Congressman RYAN has done on the Republican side is to say we are not going to put on the table any savings from the Pentagon over the next 10 years. That is hard to imagine—\$500 billion-plus a year we spend at the Pentagon and no savings? While we are cutting programs in every direction, we can't find a way to protect our men and women in uniform, keep America safe and secure, and eliminate the obvious waste of money that goes on with much of the contracting in the Pentagon? Of course we can. I am sorry Congressman RYAN doesn't see that. I do, and I believe it should be part of the conversation.

Secondly, there is no suggestion of any revenue at all as part of the solution. In fact, Congressman RYAN goes in the opposite direction and continues the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans. If we are worried about explaining to our children and grandchildren how we can leave them this debt, how can we explain Congressman RYAN's position that would have us borrow over \$1 trillion over the next 10 years to give tax cuts to the wealthiest people in America? How can we explain to our children that we are going to go to China to borrow money to give tax

cuts to wealthy people in America as we cut our deficit? That is his approach. I don't think it is complete and balanced.

There is a better way. We need to look back to the Bowles-Simpson commission, the deficit commission, and we need to move forward, after we finish this debate on the budget for the rest of the year, in a comprehensive and bipartisan fashion.

For months—literally for months—I have been engaged in a bipartisan effort with some colleagues in the Senate. We are trying to come up with something. I don't think everyone will applaud it. I know some of my colleagues will hate it. But it is going to be an honest approach to dealing with the deficit for the next 10 years. It is going to have the same Bowles-Simpson goals of \$4 trillion in deficit reduction and will include all of the major elements of our government in the conversation. I think that is the only way to honestly approach this. We can reach that debate once we get this immediate problem resolved.

So the point I wish to close with is this: We are at a moment here where we can resolve this issue, keep our government open, and move into the larger debate about our deficit in the years to come. It is morally a historically imperative debate, but in order to get beyond it, I hope Speaker JOHN BOEHNER, whom I respect as well, will accept the obvious. His riders on the Environmental Protection Agency were debated and voted on in principle already in the Senate yesterday. It has happened. We are not avoiding it. Second, their rider relating to zeroing out funding for Planned Parenthood under title X funding is one we will take up at some point. We are not running away from it. But it is one that shouldn't stop the function of this government. It would be impossible to defend closing down our government, and all of the hardship that would follow, over that one rider—or two riders—they are insisting on.

Let's move toward reducing the deficit, but let's also reduce the political rancor. Let's put some of these issues, which have been around for decades, off to another day. Let's make sure we consider them—and we will—but let's move forward now to keep this government open. Let the American people at the end of this week look at us and say: In the end, they got it right. We didn't like the way they reached this point, but they didn't do the irresponsible thing and walk away from their responsibilities. They accepted their duties, they kept the government functioning, and now they can roll up their sleeves and deal honestly with this deficit.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I wish to take a moment to describe to the American people and actually Members of both bodies of Congress what is going to happen to our troops and their families if the collapse of the budget negotiations forces the government to shut down. We look at charts and graphs and numbers, but let's talk about the reality.

While I am sure many understand that most government services will halt, it is also important to understand that some government operations will not shut down. In particular, our men and women on Active Duty and in the National Guard and Reserves will continue to serve, but they will do so without pay. At a time when we ask them to fight two wars, to help stay the slaughter in Libya, and to keep peace around the world, another burden is going to be added to their shoulders: They are going to be asked to do it without a paycheck.

Some of those in our Armed Forces—many of them—do not have savings to fall back on in hard times. Many family members are overseas fighting for America while their families are living back here. They are living paycheck to paycheck to pay for their groceries, to pay the car payments or the bills for a sick child or rent or a mortgage, while the other member of the family, the one who earns the paycheck, is over facing the possibility of dying on the field of battle. And now we tell them: Oh, stay right out there and fight. By golly, we are proud of you for fighting. Sorry we can't pay you. Because Members of Congress and the White House can't come together and deal, we can't pay you.

You and your family may not be able to buy groceries, or your child may not get the medical care needed, but, boy, are we proud of you; if you get killed, we will give you a medal.

Come on. Like so many Americans, some of those who serve in the military live paycheck to paycheck. They depend on their pay each month to put food on the table and keep a roof over their families' heads. Certainly, mortgage lenders are not known for accepting excuses when the monthly payments come due. But excuses are all that some Members of Congress can offer for why they will not come to the table and make sure our men and women in uniform get the pay they have earned.

This is not bumper sticker sloganeering government. This is what happens. It is so easy for people to stand up and sanctimoniously state that we are doing this for the good of the country. You are doing it and you are harming the families of our men and women in harm's way.

It is especially disturbing that the hard times that now are in prospect for

our troops have been completely avoidable. The possibility of a government shutdown is very real because a relative few are willing to play politics and brinkmanship at a time when the public wants basic, unadorned statesmen. They want Republicans and Democrats to act as though they also have a stake in the course of our government. The American people want Congress to do its job, and that is certainly not too much to ask. Those who are insisting on their way or no way should pause to reflect on what their intransigence means to our troops and their families and, in fact, to every American.

The decision to put politics ahead of the American people is reckless and imposes real hardship on real people. It is crueler still knowing that some of our troops, already facing fears of death or injury and sleepless nights in forward operating bases, must now add paying the electric bill and feeding their families to their list of daily worries.

I have been with some of those troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. They have enough on their minds. They have enough they face every single hour of every single day—especially every single night. They should not have the added worry of whether their families will be able to pay their bills.

Naturally, as cochair of the National Guard caucus, I worry especially for the Vermont National Guard troops who are currently forward deployed to locations throughout the world. Many of them come from our small towns and cities in Vermont and they face these very fears.

In shutting down the government, an ideologically motivated faction in Congress is willing to breach our most fundamental pact with these men and women. We have always said, "protect our Nation overseas, and we will protect your loved ones at home." Who can justify violating that pact with the men and women in uniform?

Some in Congress are already seeking cover, claiming they have put forward plans to fund the Pentagon and our troops. But, of course, even these transparent political ploys would not pay many of our intelligence personnel, our brave and dedicated forward deployed consular staff and officers and others—many of whom work side by side with our troops. Not to mention the vast number of individuals working in communities across the Nation to support our overseas operations. Every one of these dedicated public servants and every one of our troops deserves to be paid for a day's work. Our troops, their families, and those supporting them have enough to worry about without needlessly being pushed to the brink of a costly government shutdown.

I hope that, as we sit here in our plush offices, with our staff and everything we ever want, being well paid as Members of Congress, we let the reality sink in. The distinguished Presiding

Officer has spoken about this many times. The reality is that men and women—the families throughout our country—are being severely hurt. Let's not forget that.

Mr. President, we are seeing some in the other body, reacting to the ire of a minority of vocal, anti-government extremists who make no secret of their desire to shut down the government even while complaining that the government is not doing enough for them, proposing reckless cuts in programs that are vital to job creation and to national security.

Many in the other party are masters at blaming others for a budget deficit and debt they created during the last administration—self-proclaimed fiscal conservatives who, in a few short years, racked up a trillion dollar deficit by borrowing the money for two wars, something that was never done before in the history of this country. Their idea was to cut taxes for millionaires, cut taxes for companies that ship jobs overseas, cut corporate taxes, and borrow the money to pay for the wars while causing the debt to skyrocket. They burned through the Clinton era surpluses and embarked on a massive borrowing binge—and they think they can lecture us on fiscal conservatism.

Any mention of the consequences of what is being proposed is carefully avoided, but the American people should know the facts.

There are many examples. The catastrophic earthquake and tsunami and the nuclear crisis in Japan, as well as the popular uprisings and violence in North Africa and the Middle East, demonstrate once again the essential role that our Embassies and consulates and our foreign assistance programs play in protecting the safety and security of American citizens and our allies.

Our Republican friends have been urging drastic cuts to our international operations and programs, even though they, in total, comprise a mere 1 percent of the Federal budget—1 percent—and have no appreciable impact on the deficit.

Yet when a natural or manmade disaster occurs overseas and Americans are affected or an American is arrested and locked in a foreign jail, those same critics of these programs immediately expect the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development to leap into action.

In Egypt alone, at least 75,000 Americans were living, working and studying when that country erupted in civic unrest and airports and train stations were jammed with throngs of frantic people trying to leave the country. Thousands of Americans turned to the U.S. Embassy in Cairo. Our consular officers worked around the clock to help them, including a group of Vermont students, one of whom had lost his passport.

Just last week, another Vermont student was released after 2 weeks in a Syrian jail, thanks to the persistent diplomacy of U.S. Ambassador Robert

Ford and other U.S. Embassy officials, as well as the Syrian Ambassador to the United States, Imad Moustapha, who helped convince his government that a mistake had been made. My office worked closely with them, as is customary when a constituent is in trouble in a foreign land.

As every Member of Congress knows, there are countless examples such as these, involving Americans from every State, which are not reported in the press.

As the international affairs budget faces deep cuts in fiscal year 2011 and in the future, it is important to be reminded of the invaluable assistance provided by the State Department and USAID to American citizens abroad, their families in the United States, and others impacted by foreign crises.

It is also important to be reminded that Members of Congress and the American people cannot have it both ways. You cannot on the one hand support drastic budget cuts, and at the same time expect the agencies that are losing personnel and resources to be able to respond as needed to help Americans when disaster strikes.

Today the crushing demands on the State Department for American citizen services are unprecedented. In the past month alone, the Department has issued travel warnings and alerts related to political unrest or natural disasters in six countries. Americans rely on their State Department for current, accurate travel information.

Since the earthquake and tsunami, U.S. consular officers in Japan and Washington have worked ceaselessly to assist Americans in Japan, and the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo deployed teams to the Tohoku region to locate American citizens and help them find transportation away from the devastated areas. USAID sent search and rescue teams and emergency response experts to Japan.

They were doing the same thing a little over 1 year ago in Haiti, after the catastrophic earthquake there.

As much of the world's attention has shifted to Libya, the State Department continues to closely monitor the situation in Japan, including the impact of the damage to the nuclear powerplant, and to provide updated detailed travel warnings and information for Americans considering travel to Japan.

Throughout North Africa and the Middle East, to prevent chaos and suffering at borders and surrounding areas, the State Department and the USAID have provided food, water, and other humanitarian aid to refugees and internally displaced persons.

It is regrettable that despite these realities, so many in Congress support reckless cuts in operations for the State Department and USAID. It makes no sense to wait until these agencies can no longer function effectively before we recognize that we cannot ignore events beyond our borders, and that the services Americans expect from their government cost money. In

fact, the cost of everything—fuel, transport, rent, communications, and security—is going up, while budgets are being cut.

An unfortunate trend is taking hold here. Demand cuts in spending and in the taxes to pay for it, while expecting that it will not affect the government services you take for granted.

The world is a dangerous place and unanticipated disasters of every kind are occurring with remarkable frequency. American citizens are spread far and wide around the globe, and they rely on the State Department and USAID to protect their livelihoods and their security every day. For that, the people who serve in these agencies deserve our thanks and our support.

Mr. HOEVEN. 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

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I would like to speak this afternoon about an issue that I believe is of paramount importance to our efforts to restore America's economic vitality and to control our debt and our deficit. I would like to talk about jobs.

I wish to begin, however, by telling you a little bit about my home State of North Dakota. That is because today, while much of the Nation is greatly challenged by recession and joblessness, North Dakota is strong—arguably the strongest we have been at any time in our history. The reason is jobs.

Last week, we learned that North Dakota—at 3.7 percent—once again has the lowest unemployment rate in the Nation, a distinction we have held since June of 2008. Nationally, the picture is much different. As I speak, nearly 14 million Americans are still out of work, and the rate of unemployment is hovering at nearly 9 percent, where it has been for many months. Another 8 million Americans are underemployed, working part-time because their hours have been cut or they haven't been able to find a full-time job. Sadly, 1 million more have stopped looking.

Make no mistake, America has a budget problem because of too much spending but also because America has a jobs problem. I ask you: How do we generate revenues to help balance our budget, pay down debt, and provide the essential services people need without raising taxes? Jobs. How do we empower people to access affordable health insurance and quality health care without intrusive government programs? Again, jobs. How do we help secure Social Security and Medicare for our seniors and future generations? Jobs.

If we put 10 million of those 14 million unemployed workers back on the job, at the average national wage of about \$45,000, it would generate more than \$50 billion in additional revenues