

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

for the Social Security trust fund and an additional \$13 billion for Medicare every year. Obviously, that would make a huge difference for both those programs.

Clearly, to fully address our current economic predicament, we need to create jobs and lots of them. Those jobs will be created by the private sector—not by government, by the private sector. But to help our entrepreneurs and businesses create them, we must build the best business climate possible.

Ten years ago, in North Dakota, we set a course to do that. Beginning in 2001, when I first took office as Governor of North Dakota, we made conscious policy decisions that would, over time, grow and diversify our economy and create thousands of jobs for our citizens. First, we set out to build the best business climate possible, forging a legal, tax, and regulatory climate that would attract investment and stimulate innovation.

Second, we developed a roadmap for success—an economic development strategic plan that targeted industries where North Dakota holds natural advantages owing to our resources and our people.

As part of our larger strategy, we also developed a comprehensive energy policy, called Empower North Dakota, which worked aggressively to develop all of our State's natural resources and energy resources, both traditional and renewable. We even established a North Dakota Trade Office, a public sector-private sector partnership that helps market North Dakota products and services around the world to bring new dollars into our State.

As a result of these efforts, between 2000 and 2009, North Dakota's economy grew at an annual average GDP growth rate of 6.4 percent, so that by the end of the decade we had grown by 75 percent. That compares to a national growth rate over the same time period of 41 percent.

All that work to cultivate overseas markets worked too. Our exports of farm machinery, aircraft parts, biotech products, and other North Dakota goods grew by more than 300 percent in 10 years. That compares to a national growth rate of just over 60 percent. As a result, we balanced our budget year in and year out. Today, we have no general obligation debt, we have a substantial surplus, and strong reserves to secure our economic future.

Furthermore, to get there, we not only held the line on taxes, but we reduced them. We reduced property tax and we reduced income tax. Over the decade, we generated nearly 15 percent growth in total employment, encompassing almost every sector of our economy and every region of our State. At the same time, we boosted per capita income from 84 percent of the national average in 2000, well below the national average, and today we are above the national average—at 103 percent—in per capita income. We have moved up from 37th among all the

States to 17th in terms of our ranking among the 50 States.

The Wall Street Journal, Newsweek, the New York Times, USA Today, the Economist, Forbes, Money magazine, even the London Times, all have written about North Dakota's progress. Joel Kotkin, in a recent Wall Street Journal piece, called North Dakota's approach "sensible thinking" about the economy. Last year, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce ranked North Dakota as No. 1 among all 50 States as the Nation's top overall economic growth performer and job creator and not for the year but for the decade.

The things we did in North Dakota are not unique to our State. The principles we used are based on common sense and a belief that the American economy is the engine that drives the car. We can create jobs and lift our Nation out of the financial quandary we are in if we have the will to act and if we focus tirelessly on the kinds of things that create jobs and opportunity for our people.

To do that, I would like to propose a three-part strategy to get America working again. First, we need to create a legal tax and regulatory climate that gets business investment off the sidelines and gets people back to work. Second, we need to rein in spending and control our debt and deficit. Third, we need a comprehensive, pro-growth energy policy to fuel our economy, reduce our dependence on foreign energy, and create good jobs for American workers.

Let's go through each of these very straightforward recommendations, starting with the need to create a strong business climate for America with the kind of legal tax and regulatory certainty that investors need to create jobs. That means passing legislation that will eliminate or modify unwarranted or misguided regulations that are impeding business investment and stifling innovation in our country.

That effort is already underway in the Senate. Senator PAT ROBERTS of Kansas has offered a bill called the Regulatory Responsibility for Our Economy Act, which I am proud to be a cosponsor of. This bill will give the force of law to a Presidential Executive order issued earlier this year that proposes to review "rules that may be outmoded, ineffective, insufficient, or excessively burdensome, and to modify, streamline, expand or repeal them," in some cases.

If passed, our bill will make sure we will take a clear-eyed look at the rules and help restore regulatory certainty to the markets.

When we talk about unwarranted laws and regulations, however, we don't need to look too far into the past; we need only look to recently enacted laws that impede job creation and sap economic vitality.

Last year's Federal health care bill, for example, included a 1099 reporting provision that introduced a new level of bureaucracy and expense for Amer-

ica's nearly 28 million small businesses—the very engines of job creation in this country. Small businesses have created 64 percent of all the new jobs in this country over the past 15 years, and they account for more than 97 percent of all employers.

If we expect them to create jobs and get our economic engine going again, we need to reduce their regulatory burden, not bury them under burdensome new mandates such as the 1099 reform. That is why I and a bipartisan group of Senators, led by MIKE JOHANNES, signed on to a bill that just this week eliminated this onerous provision in last year's health care law and sent it off to the President for signature. I wish to commend my good friend, Senator JOHANNES, for his leadership and his hard work on this important issue.

But that is not the only feature of last year's health care bill that is undermining our business climate, driving up health care costs, and limiting choice for consumers. Punitive lawsuits and defensive medicine are inflating the cost of health care for American consumers by as much as \$100 billion every year. Yet the health care bill that is now being implemented across our country doesn't reduce these costs. We need tort reform that will help make health care more available and reduce costs.

Similarly, we need to expand competition among health insurance companies. More competition will give consumers more choice and expand the pool of the insured, thus creating further downward pressure on the cost of premiums. Just as important, by reducing health care costs and the regulatory burden on American businesses, we can help them reduce costs and do what they do best—create jobs.

Competition works to our advantage not only in markets at home but in global markets as well. Another way to strengthen our economy and get job creation going again is by promoting more international trade. Smart trade agreements can restore America's competitive edge, create more income for American citizens, more opportunities for American entrepreneurs, and more foreign dollars to help balance our trade deficit and our budget.

They can also help us turn around our trade imbalances with countries such as China, South Korea, and the European Union. We have multibillion dollar trade deficits with all of them—\$23 billion with China in January alone.

We can start the process of turning these deficits around by ratifying impending trade agreements with South Korea, Colombia, and Panama that have been languishing for 3 years.

Our trade imbalance with South Korea alone last year was \$10 billion, but the agreement awaiting approval right now could create up to 250,000 American jobs. On the other hand, if we fail to act, we stand to lose 380,000 jobs to the European Union and Canada, which have already completed

their own trade agreements with those countries.

With bipartisan support for these agreements, there is no reason for further delay. We need to act.

Empowering American businesses and entrepreneurs to do business around the world is just common sense, and that common sense is precisely what we need to apply to all our Nation's challenges. I can give you a good example in my home State of North Dakota. Right now, we are facing serious flooding in the Red River Valley, and for some time we have been working to fight chronic annual flooding in the Red River Valley, which includes the city of Fargo, one of our region's most dynamic economic engines.

Part of government's role in creating private investment and economic development is securing and protecting infrastructure so businesses can thrive. In the case of Fargo and the Valley, the Federal Emergency Management Agency—FEMA—has found it necessary to buy out houses in that area because it is more cost effective than protecting them year in and year out.

When the Agency buys out a property, however, it has a hard-and-fast rule prohibiting building structures on that property—even flood mitigation structures—to prevent development that might require future protection from flooding. It is a reasonable ban in some, maybe in many, cases but certainly not in all.

As a consequence of the rule, every year the Federal Government helps to pay to build temporary levees to protect homes along the Red River, and every year we are compelled to tear those levees down again after the flood, at great expense to the government and, ultimately, of course, great expense to the taxpayer. Everyone knows that permanent dikes would clearly be more cost effective and save money for the local, State, and Federal Government. Residents know it, FEMA knows it, local officials know it. But under current law, there is nothing they can do about it.

That is why I will be introducing legislation called the FEMA Common Sense and Cost-Effectiveness Act of 2011, to give the Agency the flexibility it needs to make commonsense decisions in these cases. Building those levees once and leaving them in place will provide better flood protection for people and for property, better fiscal stewardship, and save taxpayer dollars.

That is important. Because good fiscal stewardship is now a matter of pressing, decisive consequence for America's future. That is why the second thing we need to do, of no less importance than building a good business climate, is to reduce spending.

We need to control spending by the Federal Government. Here, the numbers speak more clearly than words. Revenues this year are projected to be—revenues, now—\$2.2 trillion. At the same time, current spending by the Federal Government is more than \$3.7

trillion, leaving a deficit of \$1.5 to \$1.6 trillion.

To meet that shortfall, we are borrowing 40 cents of every single dollar we spend, and our debt is growing at the rate of \$4 billion a day. Every dollar used to service the national debt is a dollar that will not be used to build America's infrastructure, that will not be used to keep Social Security solvent, that will not be used to reduce taxes on American businesses so they can create jobs and raise the standard of living for American workers. That is why I and 63 other Senators—32 Republicans and 32 Democrats—sent a letter to President Barack Obama earlier this month urging him to show leadership in those efforts to achieve comprehensive deficit reduction.

It is also why I and 46 other U.S. Senators announced last week that we were cosponsoring a bill to create a balanced budget amendment to the U.S. Constitution. I thank our leader, Senator MCCONNELL, for leading that effort. Nearly all States have been bound for years by a constitutional provision to keep spending within their means. This amendment requires that the Federal Government do no less. It would cap spending and balance our budget, but it also allows an appropriate exception for times of war. At the same time, it provides a transitional pathway to implement the law and protect programs such as Social Security and Medicare for our seniors and future generations of Americans.

To put this into perspective, the cost of serving America's debt over the next 10 years under the President's proposed budget—\$992 billion—is more than the entire Social Security deficit for the decade, which is about \$600 billion. In fact, fixing our debt and deficit involves not only setting priorities and cutting discretionary spending, which we are already working hard to do and we need to work hard to do, but also addressing the three entitlement programs: Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, which account for more than 60 percent of Federal spending. We need to undertake a bipartisan effort to reform these important programs in a way that safeguards our seniors and other vulnerable individuals now while protecting the solvency of these programs for generations to come. We need our President to engage with us in this process. We can do it, we must do it, and we need to start now.

My third recommendation is that we begin the process of building a comprehensive energy policy for the Nation, an "empower America" plan, if you will, that promotes the development of all of our Nation's vast energy resources, both traditional and renewable. Creating a comprehensive energy policy is especially important because our entire country—our entire economy and consequently job growth—depends on affordable and abundant energy.

A few weeks ago, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce released a study identifying

351 stalled energy projects nationwide that are costing the American economy \$1.1 trillion in lost economic impact and, more importantly, nearly 2 million jobs annually. By impeding our energy industry, we are impeding one of the most potent areas of prospective job growth. Yet Congress has not passed a comprehensive energy policy in our country in years, and frankly I don't know that we can wait any longer for that single sweeping master plan that will do it all at once. We need to build it as expeditiously as we can.

In North Dakota, we built Empower North Dakota over a decade, piece by piece, and saw firsthand the power of energy development to boost our economy. By embracing Empower North Dakota, our State alone has realized \$12 billion in new energy-related investments since 2005. With the right kind of energy policy, imagine what the impact would be for our Nation.

To expedite the process of building that energy policy on a national level, I am working with Leader MCCONNELL and the entire Republican Conference to create the kind of legal and regulatory climate our country needs to jump-start America's energy sector and create jobs. For example, this week, I, along with other Senators, cosponsored an amendment introduced by Senator MCCONNELL to the small business authorization bill. Based on legislation offered earlier this month by Senator INHOFE, which I and others cosponsored, this legislation sought to curb the EPA's authority to regulate greenhouse gas and encourage domestic energy development. A permanent measure such as this is needed to provide the certainty businesses need to make billion-dollar investments in new energy projects and, more importantly, create the good-paying jobs a robust energy sector can provide our country. Our measure won 50 votes yesterday but failed to gain the 60 necessary for passage.

We need to continue to work with our colleagues across the aisle to pass this legislation or legislation like it because impeding the energy industry is not a Republican problem or a Democratic problem, it is an American problem. It is a challenge we need to step up to and solve. That is why, in a similar bipartisan effort, I am working with Senator JOE MANCHIN to support the EPA Fair Play Act to create more certainty and more energy investment for our country.

I have also asked the Energy Information Administration to conduct a focused analysis of regulations that could be impeding the development and growth of the Nation's domestic energy production in an effort to find more ways to create rules of the road that will encourage energy companies to invest billions and to build our energy future in America. Increased domestic energy production is a three-fer. We not only promote economic vitality, but we reduce our dependence on foreign sources of energy and we create jobs.

The reality is that we can do all of these and more. We can provide a commonsense legal and regulatory environment, a favorable business climate for our industries. We can build a comprehensive energy policy that leverages all of our vast energy resources together with good environmental stewardship. We can reduce spending, and we can live within our means. We can pay down our debt and leave our children a strong financial legacy instead of a large debt. These are all things we can do and we must do for our Nation. We need to work together, my fellow Senators, to do just that, for the strength and financial well-being of our country today and for the benefit of future Americans for generations to come. The future is truly in our hands.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HAGAN). The minority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I congratulate the junior Senator from North Dakota for his initial speech here in the Senate and say to all of our colleagues that it should be no surprise that he was sent here by the people of North Dakota by an overwhelming margin. During his 10 years as Governor, the State enjoyed extraordinary success. At a time when many States were struggling financially, North Dakota had bulging surpluses and low unemployment, almost entirely as a result of the outstanding job then-Governor HOEVEN did in representing the people of North Dakota. So, as I say, it is no surprise that they sent him to join us here in the Senate by an overwhelmingly large majority, and I congratulate him on behalf of all of our colleagues on his initial speech.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I, too, rise in congratulating the Senator from North Dakota on his maiden speech. I have known then-Governor HOEVEN for quite some time. His wife and my wife have been very good friends.

What you heard is basically a background of the success he has had in the leadership of his great State. What you don't know is his ability to reach across the aisle in a bipartisan manner.

I can only say that JOHN is a dear friend, and JOHN is the type of personality we need in this body to mend this partisan gridlock in which we find ourselves. I cannot tell you how pleased I am to still be a colleague of his, and I look forward to many years of success working together, reaching out, finding the problems we have, addressing the problems, and then, like a good Governor, taking them on and making some good decisions, as he has done so well in North Dakota.

So, my good friend, it is so good to have you here. Congratulations.

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. TESTER. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, this week I got an e-mail from a first grader in Missoula, MT, 7 years old. Her note read:

Senator Tester, please pass a budget so that I can go to Yellowstone National Park this weekend, or at least wait until Monday to shut down the government.

I get a lot of letters and calls reminding me what is at stake. Yet some of our colleagues continue to put politics ahead of doing what is right. I will always remember that e-mail from Missoula. Even 7-year-olds expect us to get our job done. They expect us to work together to pass a budget. They expect us to work together to make responsible cuts. They expect us to make sure we don't put our government and the entire economy on life support. That is exactly what will happen if some in Congress let the government shut down. They will fail all of us.

If drawing a line in the sand becomes more important than working together, I think that is a shame. Of course, we can't afford the status quo either. We all know the problem. Everyone wants to point fingers. I could spend my time pointing at those who thought it was a good idea to put two wars we are fighting on the taxpayers' credit card or those who squandered a \$128 billion budget surplus in a matter of months about 10 years ago. But I will leave it at this: Our debt and spending problem is not something that we got into overnight, and it is not something we will get out of overnight.

It is not going to be fixed by slick talking points ginned up by Washington, DC, consultants. It will not be fixed by symbolic gimmicks. It certainly will not be fixed by irresponsible decisions such as ending Medicare as we know it. It will not be fixed by gutting student financial aid or physical infrastructure. Those create jobs now when our economy needs it the most.

Our spending and debt problem will be fixed by embracing a responsible, credible, long-term strategy to cut our debt; to cut spending, discretionary and mandatory—right now we are talking about cuts to only 12 percent of the budget known as discretionary spending—to strengthen our entitlement programs so they work for future generations; to reform our Tax Code so it is fair and sustainable; and to cut our defense where we can afford to cut.

We owe it to all Americans to get the job done. But we owe it to them to get the job done responsibly, and that is going to require some buy-in. But we have done it before.

During the Great Depression, people endured incredible sacrifice. But they

had inspirational leadership to challenge them to grow their way to prosperity. In World War II, they worked together and made sacrifices at home to build the machinery that helped us win victory. That momentum also created a powerful middle class. The attacks of September 11 brought us together again, and again we grew strong.

When we work together, we succeed. It is in our DNA. It is what makes us the strongest, most innovative nation in the world. Now we have to summon that strength and determination again, to lead our way out of our economic challenges. It will not happen with gimmicks. It is going to take responsible decisionmaking, compromise, and shared sacrifice.

Several of our colleagues in the Senate are already leading the way. I compliment Senators CHAMBLISS, COBURN, CONRAD, CRAPO, DURBIN, and WARNER. They are working on a bipartisan strategy to cut debt and cut spending. Their plan will include cuts to discretionary spending. It will make our entitlement programs stronger. It will propose cuts to defense spending. And it will include tax reform.

Last year, Senator Alan Simpson and Erskine Bowles led a bipartisan commission in outlining a smart, long-term, credible strategy for cutting debt and spending. Senator Simpson and Mr. Bowles say they had 14 reasons for volunteering their time on the Debt Commission. Between them, they have 14 grandkids.

While I may not embrace every component of their plan, I applaud their hard work, their leadership, their patriotism. Their hard work is a solid blueprint we are already building from. I am ready to join them, and so are many of us in this Chamber. We need to do it.

Montanans are patriots. They are ready and willing to follow our lead in providing a fair Tax Code that provides certainty and fairness. They are willing to share in the pain of responsible spending cuts that will not take our economy backwards. They know we can afford to make cuts in defense. They know we need to fix—but not dismantle or privatize—our entitlement programs.

What is the alternative? Well, we may find out the hard way if folks are not willing to work together to reach agreement by midnight tomorrow. Shutting down the government means our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan will not get their paychecks on time—even though they will still be serving us.

This week, I heard from a soldier deployed in Afghanistan. He said he would be OK in a short shutdown because he has some savings. But if their paychecks stop coming, a lot of his fellow soldiers will be hurt. Many have lower ranks. Many have pressing financial obligations such as mortgages and car payments, kids to take care of. They would get the short end of the stick.