

these cuts are a good downpayment on even more progress in our fiscal 2012 budget and beyond.

As a member of the Senate Budget Committee, I am already putting forth concrete recommendations for more cuts in future budget years, such as eliminating the "orphan earmarks," saving upwards of \$1 billion; cutting subsidies for millionaire farmers, saving, again, billions of dollars; cutting tax loopholes, saving tens of billions of dollars.

Shutting down the government is not going to get us any closer to the real goal of reducing the deficit. We didn't save a single dime during the last shutdown. In fact, it cost the American taxpayers \$1.4 billion.

The economic costs will be even more. Dozens of military construction projects are stalled right now, putting at risk hundreds of jobs this summer and needed improvements to Alaska's military bases. I have talked to these contractors, these individuals who are waiting for us to get our work done to provide the certainty they need to get their work done. There is over \$¼ billion pending and waiting for the work to be done.

Military families are also caught in the middle. The military will get paid, but the uncertainty of when they will get paid, because they will be waiting on us to pass a bill, is unfair. We should push harder to work out a compromise for them.

At the same time, civilian construction projects and the jobs created by them for docks, housing, and facilities are also at risk. Critical contracts to move forward on the land transfers to the State of Alaska and Alaska Native Corporations will not get done in time for the summer work.

Alaska businesses looking to start new operations won't be able to get the SBA loans, families won't get the FHA or the USDA home loans, and the tax refunds for people who have sent in their taxes by mail won't be processed.

Also, key permits to onshore oil and gas development, which have been painfully slow to move forward, will be stalled even further.

When I was home during this past week, I heard from some of the more than 17,000 Federal workers in Alaska about their concerns. It might be easy for some to criticize public employees, but in Alaska these workers are members of our communities. They contribute to our economy, pay taxes, and they provide critical services all across my State. Many are getting by paycheck to paycheck. A shutdown could mean their rent doesn't get paid, their mortgages are put at risk, and their bank accounts won't balance. We cannot and should not play politics with their jobs just because we are not doing our job.

Americans—Alaskans—are frustrated. They are wondering what the heck we are doing here, and I agree with them. It has only been 3 months since the new Congress convened. Not

much to report back home to Alaskans who work every day making progress in our State.

It is past time to get back to work, to roll up our sleeves, finish this budget, and put the 2012 budget on the table and focus on the economy and creating jobs. Our economy is starting to turn the corner. Frankly, the many steps Congress took over the last 2 years to rebuild this economy are working. Unemployment dipped to 8.8 percent, 216,000 jobs were created last month—the largest increase since last May—and TARP, which we all had mixed feelings about, is not only being paid back. It is returning a profit to the Federal Government.

Let's not put a wrench in our economic recovery. These are good data points, but we are far from getting the job done. The economy is still fragile. Rising gas prices make it harder. We need to show voters and the folks back home we can work together on deficit reduction but also tackle energy legislation, tax reform, small business support, and education investment.

I know it will not be easy to get all this done, but this is what folks in my State sent me here to do—to get the work done, balance the budget, reduce spending, and continue to invest in growing our economy. I always tell Alaskans when I get back home that all the easy issues are done. Only the hard ones are left. That is why we are here.

Mr. President, it is time for us to get back to work.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a period for morning business for debate only be extended until 6 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the majority leader to be recognized at 6 p.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Hearing no objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BEGICH. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today, as so many of my colleagues have, to discuss the situation we find ourselves in. Many ask: What has happened? Why are we here? Why is there so much coverage and concern about a potential shutdown of the United States Government?

I was on a radio station report from Washington by phone to Wyoming earlier this morning with a friend of mine, and he was asking how we got into this situation and what we can do about it.

Well, there are two different situations we are in. One is, we are in this situation because a budget, a responsible budget, that should have been passed 7 months ago—when the Democrats were in charge of the House, in charge of the Senate, and in the White House—was never passed. That is what we are dealing with today in one part.

The bigger part of how we got into this situation is that we are a nation in significant debt. We owe a remarkably large amount of money—\$14 trillion is the number that is consistently discussed. Very few people have a concept of exactly how much money that is. Yet we owe that amount of money. People say: Who do we owe it to? I visited with a group of high school students from Douglas, WY, earlier this week, and I asked them: Do you know who we owe the money to? They said: Yeah, we owe a lot of it to China.

That is of great concern to the people of America, people concerned about national security, our financial security, and how we as a nation are viewed in the world, as well as how we view ourselves.

As families across this country, we live within our means. We balance our budgets every year. I am from Wyoming, where, according to our constitution, we must balance our budget every year, and we do. That is why we have money available for scholarships and other opportunities for young people, as we invest the money that we have saved from year to year in our people, in our future, in our communities, and in our land. Yet Washington doesn't seem to learn that lesson, even today.

So here we are with this situation where we are looking at a potential shutdown of the government because this government has maxed out its credit card. Others may decide to no longer extend credit to us, and it has come down to the final hour.

Every day this government spends \$4 billion more than it takes in. Last month, Washington spent eight times as much money as it took in. Every American child is now born owing \$45,000. This is a travesty. When I take a look at this and say, we know now how we got into this situation: We have overspent. Our problem is not that we are taxed too little, it is that we spend too much. The American people understand that. So what we need to do is get the spending under control. We need to spend less.

We are in a situation where you say, what can we do about it right now, today? Well, for those same high school students who are here from Douglas, WY, they know a bill starts in the House and then goes to the Senate, and is passed by one body, passed by another body, goes to the President for his signature. So here we are. We do have a bill that has been passed by the House of Representatives to keep the government open, to keep the government functioning. I am ready right now to vote for that bill.

What has the President of the United States said about that? The President has threatened to veto that bill. He said he would veto a bill that would temporarily extend and keep the government open for 1 week. So apparently the President is not interested in keeping this government open for the next week through tonight at midnight.

I would wish he would take a different tack and say, let's continue to work on the overall problem but keep the government functioning. You know, families all around this country—and I talk to people every weekend in Wyoming—are worried about the cost and the quality of their own lives. When they look at this incredible debt coming out of Washington, they say, how is this going to continue to impact us? The families all around Wyoming and around the country and the States are finding they are going to pay about \$700 more for fuel this year than they did last year because of the pain at the pump.

Of course, I believe that is made worse by the policies of this administration. But for families who have kids and with bills and a mortgage, \$700 increased gasoline prices impacts them in the money they have available for other things. So it is a direct impact on the quality of their lives. They are looking back here to Washington saying, what are those people doing?

I had a call yesterday in my office from a man in the military. He said, why are they not going to continue to fund the military? Well, that is part of the bill that has passed the House that will continue to keep the military funded, functioning. He said, you know, I am not worried about me. He said, I am worried about these younger guys, the newer ones in the military, the men and women who may have a young family. I want to make sure they are taken care of. He said, do not worry about me. Worry about them. Think about each and every one of those young men and women who are in uniform defending our country.

Why would the President say: If you pass what the House has passed—which does cut some spending and keeps the military functioning—I will veto it? That is what the President of the United States said, he would veto it. Rather than keep everything functioning and fund the military, the President has said he would veto it because it was only a 1-week extension, so that all of the other issues could be worked out.

Remember, all we are talking about is this year's budget. We are now at 7 months into the fiscal year. This is something that should have been done last year. But the Democrats have absolutely failed to live up to their obligations of passing a budget. Certainly failed the obligations of living within the budget. But there is a proposal today to keep the government open, to fund the troops, and yet I hear the President of the United States say no.

There has been discussion on this floor about things that are called policy riders. It was interesting because today in Politico, there is a headline: "Dems Embraced Policy Riders in the Past."

What sort of policy riders? When I hear on the floor: Oh, no, policy riders are all bad. Well, the repeal of a school voucher program in the District of Co-

lombia. That was a policy rider in the past. Travel to Cuba, that was a policy that Democrats put in in the past. And it mentions a project—they call it a pet project—of the majority leader. It says: Delaying the development of Yucca Mountain as a nuclear waste storage site, as part of a policy rider on a budget bill issue.

So this is something that, to me is not new, to this body is not new. What is new is that the President of the United States has threatened to veto and to shut down the government of this country because he will not deal with a bill that will fund our troops, and will make cuts in spending because it is for a time-limited issue, and at a time when we ought to say, let's keep the government open and let us fund the military.

Who, in fact, would be wanting for there to be a shutdown? I am not looking for that sort of thing. And then I see there is someone who has actually been rooting for a shutdown. It is the former chairman of the Democratic National Committee, Howard Dean. These are the things that he said about a shutdown. He said: "If I was head of the Democratic National Committee, I would be quietly rooting for it."

He went on to say: "From a partisan point of view, I think it would be best thing in the world to have a shutdown." Is that what we need, a partisan point of view? What we need are solutions for America.

I see that there are colleagues on the floor ready to speak. So with that, I ask that we come to a solution, deal with the issues of the incredible amount of debt, keep the government going, pass what has passed the House, fund the troops, cut the spending and get this to the President to sign.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I wanted to take the floor for a few minutes to talk about where I was supposed to be today, which is Denver, CO, not on this floor, because we were hosting a townhall meeting in Denver, MARK UDALL and I were, to discuss our long-term deficit and debt problems.

We had invited Senator Simpson from Wyoming—my colleague from Wyoming just spoke—a great Republican Senator, the co-chair of the President's Deficit and Debt Commission, to Denver for this session. He agreed to come.

The former head of the Office and Management and Budget got on a plane, flew to Denver, they agreed to come, and some others. More important than that, we put this out to the public, and it was almost immediately oversubscribed so many people wanted to get in, to have a real conversation, an authentic conversation, about what we were going to do finally to dig out from underneath this incredible deficit and debt we face.

I inconvenienced a lot of people inviting them to Denver. But they are

happy to do it anyway because they are so committed to this set of issues, and they think having a conversation in the center of our country, in our Rocky Mountain West about these issues may allow some common sense to prevail.

But the inconvenience they suffered by traveling to Denver is nothing, nothing compared to the inconvenience, to say the least, that the American people are going to suffer if this government shuts down. It is not just 850,000 Federal employees. The fact that we have got troops deployed all across the globe, small businesses trying to get loans from the SBA, homeowners, or people who hope to become homeowners, trying to get a mortgage through the FHA, all of that will shut down if this government shuts down. Not to mention the fact we have been told that the shutdown will cost our economy at least \$8 billion a week, if this government is shut down, and .2 percent of GDP growth for every week this government is shut down, just at a time when our economy is starting to show some sign of life.

I have said on the floor over the last couple of days that no local government official in my State, none, zero, Republican or Democrat, would ever say, we are going to close the government. We have decided that we cannot get along, we cannot agree, we cannot figure it out, so the city and County of Denver is going to close, the city of Grand Junction will close, or the school district is going to close. No one in Colorado would think to say that to their constituents and we should not think about it either. But some people say, wow, there must be some incredibly significant disagreement that is keeping the House and the Senate from working together to get this done, Republicans and Democrats from working together, to get this done.

Last night I brought a slide to show what that disagreement looks like. This was yesterday. I have heard some people say that there is agreement on the number of cuts we are going to make today and last night. But yesterday, the parties were several billion dollars apart. That is what was said. So I made a chart that showed the American people what that meant, and \$7 billion is what I assigned to the difference. That is probably more than the difference was. It is certainly more than it is today. That is a lot of money, by the way. But we have a \$3.5 trillion operating budget, and a \$1.6 trillion deficit.

I wanted to show what the dispute looked like compared to our deficit, and compared to our operating budget. And, sorry, but I could not fit it on one chart. It actually is on two charts. I could not get it enough charts or hold them together, because this is the operating budget over here. I would need two more of these posters on top of this to be able to show you the relationship between the so-called dispute and our operating budget.

I have spent half my life in business and half my life working in local government. I can tell you that this is a meaningless dispute, utterly meaningless. Look at it. It has nothing to do with our long-term deficit and debt problem. It has nothing to do with what the good people in Colorado are talking about today at the forum that I am not going to be able to attend.

So in view of that, it seems to me that taking the risk of closing our government down, charging our economy an \$8 billion note every week, and concerning our troops, who should not be worried about whether they are going to get a paycheck, makes no sense at all.

My hope is this—I see other colleagues on the floor—that the leadership of both parties in the Senate and the House and our President, in the next several hours, will seal a deal that makes sure our government stays open.

But beyond that, to all of my colleagues in this body, looking forward to the negotiation we are going to have on the debt ceiling, looking forward to the negotiation we are going to have on our deficit and our debt, I hope we can come together and agree on a process and a structure that actually leads us to agreement rather than one that leads us in the direction we have been in over the last 2 or 3 weeks.

Our country simply cannot afford for us not to get our job done and be distracted by disagreements that are meaningless to people in their daily lives. I know we can do better. I know we can do better as Democrats and Republicans. And once we get through this, I want to say, I will do absolutely everything I can to build bipartisan support for a solution to our fiscal problems.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of New Mexico). The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, if the differences are meaningless maybe our Democratic colleague would agree and we would have an agreement if it is so insignificant. But it is not totally insignificant.

If you take \$61 billion in spending down from the baseline as the House legislation that they have passed and sent here does, it reduces spending by \$61 billion. If you do that, it reduces the baseline \$61 billion. My staff on the Budget Committee has calculated that would save \$860 billion over 10 years. Those numbers have not been disputed.

In fact, it does make a difference. We are on the wrong trajectory. We need to get on the right trajectory. Our Democratic colleagues, it seems, have to be dragged, kicking and screaming out of denial and into the reality that we are spending too much. We are running up too much debt.

I am pleased to see they have agreed to consider these proposals and have passed a couple of continuing resolutions to fund the government at a slightly lower level. That is progress.

We have avoided shutdowns to this date. Hopefully we can avoid another one. But if we have another short-term agreement today, it is nowhere close to what is needed to put our country on a sound financial course. We have been warned we are facing another recession if we do not change. That is what we have got to do. This spasm has come about because our Democratic colleagues failed to pass a budget last year. They did not even bring a budget to the floor.

They passed not a single appropriations bill last year on the floor of the Senate and still have not brought to the floor any legislation to even begin to form a budget for this year and to propose any funding for the last 6 months of this fiscal year. We haven't seen legislation about that. They want to meet in secret and talk and negotiate.

The House has passed legislation that funds the government, that funds the military through the end of the year, reduces \$61 billion. They have also sent legislation over that says: OK, we will do 1 more week with a small reduction of \$12 billion, and we will fund the military. And let's do that if you don't want to agree to the full agreement for the rest of the year.

The lack of action is only in one Chamber; that is, this Chamber. Has the Senate proposed any new legislation? No. I am saying this really not quite as critically as it probably sounds; our colleagues just have not comprehended the plain fact that business as usual is over. They think this country can continue to spend the way we have been doing. They think these huge deficits can be funded out of thin air without consequence, that we can borrow unlimited amounts—\$1.6 trillion to fund the government this year, borrow that without consequence. They think the American people will not support and will defeat Members of Congress who tell the truth about the condition we are in and who have the gumption to take real steps to reduce spending. They think it is inconceivable that our government spending levels can actually be reduced. They think if they plan a 3-percent increase in spending and it gets increased only 1 percent, the government has suffered a 2-percent cut. That is the way they talk about it. That is why we are broke, that kind of accounting. They think the government can create money, create wealth out of nothing. We can just pass a law, and it becomes so. They ignore the fact that debts must be paid and interest on our debt has to be paid.

Expert after expert has told the Congress, has written papers and articles and op-eds, that we are on an unsustainable path. There is not one expert I know of who would deny that the budget submitted to the Congress just a few weeks ago by the President is sound. Indeed, President Obama's choice to head the debt commission, Erskine Bowles, when the budget was

first announced, said it is nowhere close to what is needed to avoid our fiscal nightmare. This is a man he appointed to head the debt commission who has spent weeks and months taking testimony about the financial condition of America, the man he asked to sum up the kind of problem we have and how to get out of it.

The American people understand it. They have been shocked by the irresponsibility shown by Congress. They have been shocked by what we have been doing. Four years ago, our deficit was \$162 billion. It jumped to 450. Then the next year it was \$1.3 trillion; the next year, \$1.2 trillion. The next year, this year, on September 30, it is projected to be \$1.5 or \$1.6 trillion. We are on a completely unsustainable course. President Obama's budget, as scored by the CBO, shows that in the 10th year the projected deficit would be \$1.2 trillion. This year, we take in \$2.2 trillion and we spend \$3.7 trillion. Forty percent of what we are spending this year is borrowed. That is why this is an unsustainable course. There is no other alternative than to acknowledge that.

The American people have sent letters, e-mails, telegrams, phone calls, attended town meetings, had conferences to try to save this country we love from the fiscal nightmare Chairman Bowles said awaits us if we don't take real action. Is there something wrong with that? Should they not be upset with Congress going down a path without any attempt to get off it, with the most reckless debts we have ever seen in the history of America and with no end in sight?

These concerned Americans, many of whom have not been active politically before, did one more thing: They went to the polls and voted. They voted for new candidates they felt would take the action necessary to protect America from financial disaster and to defend the bedrock of our legal system—the Constitution. The result was a colossal and historic shellacking from the big spenders.

Those who said: Things are fine. We in Washington will take care of you. Don't question us. We will pass a Federal takeover of health care. I know you don't want it, but we know better. Isn't that what they said? We are progressives. We are smart. We are educated, more than you. We know deficits don't really matter. Countries have deficits all the time. While you don't understand, we know we have to bail out these bankers and these financiers, these Wall Street big shots, because principles of responsibility and accountability don't really apply because we know better. We are smarter. Your old principles are fuddy-duddy. Following the rules is not important. Rules don't have fixed meanings. The Constitution doesn't really apply. It is old. It is out of date. Just leave us alone with your money and the power to borrow, and we will take care of you. Trust us. That didn't sit well with the American people this last election.

They sent a message, in my opinion, that was crystal clear.

So should anybody be surprised, should there be any surprise that 64 new Members of Congress who had run and won elections promising to do something about reckless spending didn't rubberstamp the Senate and the President's proposal to fund increased funding for the rest of the fiscal year, that they insisted that reductions occur and sent over a \$61 billion reduction, which, out of a \$3,700 billion budget, is not much, about 1 percent? States are reducing spending far more than that.

We have a choice, don't we? What is the choice? Business as usual or taking the tough steps like Governors, mayors, counties commissioners, and families are making this very moment. Our Governor in Alabama announced a 15-percent reduction in spending.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator has expired.

Mr. SESSIONS. This \$61 billion doesn't come close to that. It is 1 or 2 percent of total government spending.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I rise to speak about decisions we need to make about cutting spending, decisions we need to make now.

The Congress and the White House have not agreed on how much spending needs to be cut or where the cuts need to come from, but at least we can all agree that spending does need to be cut. Republican and Democratic administrations and Congresses for decades have continually increased Federal spending. Change is hard. It can be painful. That is because we have lots of ideas for great programs that would really help people out. But it is absolutely essential that our spending habits take a 180-degree turn starting right now.

Tonight at midnight, the government will shut down if Congress does not pass a continuing resolution. This situation can be avoided if decisions are made in the next several hours.

The House approved a temporary plan yesterday to fund the government for another week while a longer term deal was worked out. That plan also funds our military through September. It includes language the Democrats have approved in the past and the President has signed. But the full Senate—all Senators, Democrats and Republicans alike—has not been allowed a chance to vote on it.

In the Senate, we don't always agree on every line included in a given bill, and we don't get a chance to vote on every line included in a given bill, but I will venture to say most of us can agree on some of them. We can all agree that a government shutdown is not an outcome anyone wants.

The bottom line is that talk is cheap, and it is time to stop talking about passing a continuing resolution and take action. Actually, it is action that

should have happened last September. Then we could be working on the next year instead of the last year. The House-passed bill gives us such an opportunity. It is the only bill that provides funding for the troops, funds the government, and continues the practice of cutting spending.

We are in this position because we do not have a budget from last year, and we do not have completed funding bills for the current fiscal year. The current fiscal year started last October 1—not January 1, last October 1. We were supposed to get that finished up in September so that agencies know what they are going to be spending for the next fiscal year beginning October 1. Without action, the agencies get to spend a proportionate amount of what they spent the previous year.

This year, we haven't had nearly the pressure to get a budget done that we have had in previous years. But it is easy to know why. The previous year, the spending increased by 18 percent. So agencies get to continue spending at 18 percent above previous levels until we do something about it.

It is far too late to do what we should have done last September, which is make drastic cuts. We have already had 6 months of additional spending, which makes it a little tougher at this time of year because any spending cuts have to be taken out of the total year's revenue beginning now. So a 50-percent decrease in an overall budget now is tough because it is taken from funding for the remainder of the fiscal year. I am an accountant, so I like to explain how funding cuts work.

I am especially concerned about our men and women in uniform who are putting their lives on the line for this country. They will be paid despite the shutdown, but their compensation should not have to be delayed. They don't hesitate to defend this country, and we should not hesitate to return that loyalty. I strongly support efforts to make sure military personnel and their families are paid without delay if the government shuts down.

I am hearing from servicemembers and their families in Wyoming. They are worried about paying the rent, paying the bills, feeding their children. Some have recently been transferred and are dealing with the expense of moving their families across country or, in some cases, back to the United States. They do not know where the backpay will come from and are not sure what to tell their landlords or their banks. They want and deserve answers.

For some time, we have been talking about reining in spending and making sure our grandchildren are not saddled with the enormous debt this country is facing. What we need to do in Washington is live within our means. We have not been doing that, and it shows. We have a \$14 trillion debt, and it is growing daily. Does anybody know what 1 trillion is? I will tell you a good start: Write the number "14" and put 12

zeros after it. It is a whole different number than 1,000 or 1 million or 1 billion. I saw a kid with a T-shirt that said: Please don't tell them what comes after a trillion. They are worried about it, and they should be. We should all be worried about it.

This year we are going to take in \$2.2 trillion. That is a lot of money. Unfortunately, we are going to spend \$3.7 trillion. Imagine if you are a person who makes about \$67,000 a year, and you spend \$100,000 a year, each and every year. Where are you going to get the money? Well, for a while you could probably borrow it. That is what we have been doing. We are borrowing 40 cents of every \$1 we spend. That is the only way we can stay afloat—by borrowing 40 cents of every \$1.

That means the interest on what we owe is \$616 million a day—a day. We are haggling over \$61 billion in cuts. That would fund the government's interest for 100 days—a drop in the bucket. But we have to start sometime, and the best time to start is now.

Yesterday, Britain raised their interest rates one-quarter of a percent. That is not much. Do you know what happens if our bonds go up one-quarter of a percent? We are spending \$240 billion—with a B—a year on interest. If it goes up by 1 percent, we are going to spend another \$140 billion a year on interest. Interest payments do not buy military equipment. They do not build schools. Interest payments go to other parts of the world, some of which are not our friends. If our interest rates increased by one quarter of one percent, that would be an additional \$35 billion owed—\$35 billion just in increased interest. If it goes up a whole percent, it is \$140 billion.

So what we have been talking about is going back to 2008 levels of spending, plus inflation. I have been talking to Wyoming folks who have come out here. March is a big month for people to come to Washington because they all come out for their special programs to make sure we know how important they are. Of course, one disappointment I always have is they think each one of those programs gets a vote. They do not. By the time it gets here, what we get to do is vote for a package that cuts spending or sometimes a package that increases spending. We do not even get to vote on one that keeps spending neutral. In the condition we are in, we have to be voting for the one that cuts spending—whatever one it is that happens to get to us. Yes, cutting spending is going to inflict some pain on some programs that each of us feels is extremely important.

It will affect families. It will affect people. But that is what happens when you get so delayed in outlining what you are going to pay that you are 6 months late. If you were paying your own bills and you were 6 months late paying them, what would your creditors say? They would be a little upset. That is where we are. We are that far behind. It is a dilemma, how to fund

the government so it spends within its means. But we are going to have to do that.

When I explain where we are and what we have to do and talk about going back to 2008 levels, I have been real pleased that the Wyoming people say: Well, we can live with that. Hopefully, we don't have to go below the 2008 levels. Well, if we were being serious about it, we would. But that is where we are talking about going, the 2008 levels. So that is what we are facing today. The budget forecast for the future is troubling if we make changes now and dire if we do not. With Americans across the country tightening their belts, it is time for the Federal Government to do the same.

Folks in Wyoming do understand this concept. Our State is required—and many States are required—to operate under a balanced budget, and that does not mean borrowing money in order to balance the budget. That means spending less than the revenues you get in any given year. Wyoming is one of the few States that are still operating in the black.

We noticed there was a problem, and I want to congratulate Senator CONRAD and Senator Gregg for getting together the deficit commission bill. We got a lot of cosponsors on it, and we had a vote on it. We did not have the 60 votes that were necessary to do it. But I applaud the President for picking that up and appointing a deficit commission. I think he had two great cochairs. He had Alan Simpson, a former Senator, and Erskine Bowles, who was the Chief of Staff for President Clinton. They joined with 16 other people to figure out how to get out of this morass. They came up with a plan, a good plan.

Their 18-member Commission had to have 14 members in favor of it before they could actually put it into a forced vote for us. They did not get that. They came close, but they did not get that. Of course, I would have liked them to have broken that down, promised they would do all six parts but break it down into six different parts because different people objected to different parts, and there would have been enough support to pass each part. We may have to do that in order to get the same thing done on the Senate floor. I hope we will pursue that. We need to pursue that. It is an absolute must.

The President did the right thing appointing the Commission. But we had the State of the Union speech this year, and I thought he would take what the Commission said and make it clear to the United States that we must follow the Commission's recommendations. The President is very good at making things clear, and they gave him a blueprint to make clear. I think everybody in the United States would have understood. In fact, I think a lot of people in the United States understand, even without the explanation. They know if you spend more than you take in, you are going broke. We have been doing it so long we are \$14.6 trillion broke.

President Obama had another opportunity, which was the budget, and I hoped his budget would reflect what the deficit commission said. One of the things I found was he took some of the savings in tax expenditures that could have resulted in some lower tax rates to increase our international competitiveness and he spent it on new programs. As I mentioned before, everybody has ideas for new programs, and a lot of them are good ideas, and they would have an impact. But we are not even able to afford the programs we already have.

I wish to laud Senator COBURN for joining me in asking for a review of duplicative programs. In one department, we found \$10 billion worth of duplicative programs. That is not fraud, waste, and abuse. That is people doing the same things as everybody else. I know from working on education that in preschool we have 69 different preschool programs that receive almost as much money as all of kindergarten through high school from the Federal Government. There is a review on which ones are effective and which ones are not, but we do not ever do anything with the ones that are not. We are going to have to start eliminating ineffective programs.

Several of my colleagues and I have suggested going back to funding levels enacted in 2008 before the economic stimulus bill became the baseline for government spending.

It is time to start making tough choices. If we do not make cuts now, all the scenarios down the road are worse than what we are facing today.

Let's stop the partisan banter and concentrate on the job we are here to do. The current discussions between the Congress and the White House are the beginning of America's journey back from the brink of financial ruin. This is the first of many budget engagements. Democrats and Republicans are playing chicken and neither is swerving. There may be a collision tonight, but in the end, amongst the wreckage, smoke, and scattered debris, I know America has to be the one left standing.

We can make it easy or we can make it hard. We do need to focus on getting a long-term funding bill passed for the remainder of the fiscal year—not just the next 5 days, the remainder of the fiscal year. Time is running out in that year.

If we can get this done, we can start doing the real work; that is, focusing on the Nation's solvency for future generations. Senator CONRAD, who is the chairman of the Budget Committee, has said he is not going to start on the next year's budget until we finish this year's appropriations. I think that probably makes sense so you know how much money there is left over. But, wait a minute, there is not any money left over. We are overspending.

As a grandpa, I do want to get this done so my grandchildren and other

children across the State of Wyoming and across the Nation are not stuck with the consequences of our inaction. I hope everyone here hopes they never have to answer to any of their grandchildren why they had a chance to fix the problem and they did not. I do not think that will happen. I think we will reach an agreement. I hope it is done tonight.

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. SESSIONS. 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. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I will share a few thoughts, and if any of my colleagues come to the floor, I would be pleased to yield to them.

I indicated earlier, pretty firmly, that I thought our Democratic colleagues did not recognize the severity of the crisis we are facing and were unwilling to confront the reality that we have to change what we are doing. We do not have the money. When you are spending \$3.7 trillion and taking in \$2.2 trillion and there is no real prospect of any alteration of that trajectory, something has to change, just like everybody in the States are doing.

But one of the things that is galling to me is that not only are they resisting taking any action to change the trajectory in any significant way, they are going about to savage, criticize good and decent people who are calling for change, people who pay their salaries. They are labeling the millions of Americans who took to the streets during the last election, went door to door, or had town meetings or rallies or protests, who wrote letters to Congress, wrote letters to the newspaper, called in to radio programs and said, We don't like what is going on in Washington—they are labeling those people who participated, many of them in politics for the first time in their lives because they were worried about America, as extremists, radicals, blind ideologues, basically with no common sense. I don't think that is accurate. I don't think that is fair. I think every expert we have had testify before the Budget Committee has said the same thing: You are spending this country into oblivion. Mr. President, you need to submit a budget that gets us off this path. It needs short-term spending reductions and long-term plans to deal with the surging instability in our large entitlement programs. You need to get busy now, and if you don't get busy now, things will be worse.

Chairman Bernanke of the Federal Reserve said to the Budget Committee, regarding the debts over 10 years from now: Don't worry, it is not going to get there, because you are going to have a debt crisis before you get there, and you are going to have to make changes

in the midst of a financial crisis—the worst possible time to make those choices.

These men and women who expressed their concerns about America are good people. They have been using the phrase I thought was interesting, that Pete Domenici, the former Senator from New Mexico and former chairman of the Budget Committee said: “I have never been more afraid for my country.” I have never been more afraid for my country. That is the heart and soul of the people who stood up in this last election who are concerned about their country. It is the establishment—the go-along, the no-change, the people in denial, we can’t cut spending, it will never work, no matter what we do it won’t make any difference.

I thank the Chair. I see my colleagues here. I will be pleased to yield the floor.

I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. 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. COONS. Mr. President, I rise today to add my voice to those who have spoken on this Chamber floor this afternoon to express frustration and concern about where we are as our Federal Government seems to be moving inexorably toward a shutdown this evening.

As I have worked hard with my staff here in Washington and at home to help them prepare for and explain to the people whom I represent what is going on here and why, I have struggled. I have genuinely struggled to understand why this impasse is leading, I think now inevitably, toward a government shutdown. I still remain hopeful we will be able to find some resolution in these last few hours. But I think it is critical the people of the United States understand the consequences of a government shutdown.

This isn’t just about sending home Federal employees. This is going to have a significant impact on our economy, on our recovery, on working families all over this country, and I think on our reputation around the world. At a time when many of us are standing up and saying the United States and our system of democratic capitalism is a model other nations should follow, our inability as a Congress—the House and Senate working together—to reach a responsible consensus on what we all agree is one of our top priorities is profoundly frustrating to me.

I was elected by the people of Delaware and sent here to deal with three things: to try and get our private sector going again, creating high-quality, good jobs for the people of Delaware and our country; to deal with our significant deficit and our dramatic na-

tional debt and the very real challenge to our future posed by them; and to try and do it in a responsible and balanced and bipartisan way. In my view, at this point in this budget fight, from everything I have been able to hear from the press and from the leadership of my party here in this body, it has stopped being about cutting the deficit and has instead turned into a fight about ideology. If I understand correctly, as of last night at the end of the negotiations, they moved from having 60 riders, so-called, on the bill that would fund the Federal Government for the rest of the year, to down to just 1 or 2.

I thought one of the good things that came out of the 2010 election was a broad-based focus—particularly by some of the tea party, but lots of folks in our country who were upset with how Washington works—a broad-based focus to stop having bills that were loaded up with lots of riders and lots of extraneous things and to try and have commonsense legislation that is easy to understand and that does what it is meant to do. This, as I understand it, is no longer about the deficit and about the budget. We are not being asked to consider whether we should cut \$70 billion or \$72 billion or \$78 billion; we are instead being asked to agree to defunding title X.

Title X, a program that goes back to 1970, was enacted and signed into law by President Nixon and provides a remarkable range of health services to women all across this country. In my State of Delaware, there are 26 community health centers that are funded by title X. Just five of them are affiliated in some way with Planned Parenthood.

I wanted to come to the floor and take a moment to focus on what title X funds: preventive health services, contraceptive services, pregnancy testing, but also screening for cervical and breast cancer, screening for blood pressure, anemia, diabetes, basic infertility, health education, and referrals for other health and social services. I know and have visited several of these health centers in my State. They provide services to folks who otherwise have no access to basic health care. If I understand correctly, what has happened in this body is that we have come down to being willing to shut down the entire Federal Government over this one issue of ideology. I am embarrassed and ashamed on some level that we can’t get this resolved.

As I understand it, the folks who came to Washington seeking aggressive deficit reduction and spending cuts in this fiscal year have achieved virtually all of their objectives. I think the initial goal was \$100 billion. My understanding, as the Presiding Officer heard as well in our caucus lunch, is that we have agreed to up to \$78 billion in cuts in this fiscal year across the board in lots of different sources of discretionary as well as other programs that can be cut this year. That is a hard concession for folks who support government action in our community and in our society to accept.

But I think one of our challenges is for the folks who may be on the other side of this debate to hear “yes,” to accept that we have come almost 80 percent of the way to meeting their initial goal, and to instead recognize that I think this has long since turned into a fight over ideology—over the narrow issue of women’s health.

Let me give one last example, if I can, of what this means in my hometown. My Senate office in Delaware and I have been working hard for several months to follow on the example of my predecessor in this seat, Senator Ted Kaufman of Delaware, and host a job fair on Monday, from 9 to 4, at the single biggest public space in Delaware, the Riverfront Arts Center. We are going to host a job fair. We have 50 employers lined up ready to interview people. We expect more than 1,000 out-of-work Delawareans to show up, resumes in hand, ready to interview and, hopefully, to be hired. If I understand the rules right, if the Federal Government shuts down tonight, my staff can’t carry out this job fair on Monday.

Job one for me, and I think job one for all of us in this Chamber, is helping our private sector, helping small businesses, helping our communities connect good jobs with the folks who are out of work and seeking employment. Fortunately, in our case, we have scrambled and worked hard the last few days. The Governor of Delaware, our Department of Labor, the Delaware economic office, and other volunteers have worked hard and stepped up to make sure this job fair comes off on Monday just fine without interruption.

We need to be focused on reining in the deficit and the debt, dealing with our long-term budget, and getting folks back to work.

In conclusion, it is my hope that as a body we can come together in a commonsense way. If we need to have a vote on the floor, if we need to have a fight about access to health care for women in title X, let’s have that debate, but this should be a discussion today about the deficit and about funding the operations of the Federal Government for the year ahead. I look forward and hope we can turn back to that very real work and not instead have a fight about ideology and access to women’s health.

Thank you very much, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

COTE D’IVOIRE

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, first of all, I wish to compliment my good friend, Senator COONS from Delaware, for something he has done recently along with Senator ISAKSON as the chairman and the ranking member of the African Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. They have responded to my request to have a hearing on the tragedies and