

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I thank my colleague from Oklahoma for his leadership on the Environment and Public Works Committee. I am pleased to be back on that committee with him. I share very much the substance of his views about the need to produce more oil and gas. It keeps money in the United States, creates jobs in the United States, and creates tax revenues for the United States. Offshore oil and gas in our gulf produces billions of dollars for States and the Federal Government. Why we would want to produce oil and gas off Brazil and not produce it off our shore I do not know. I thank my colleague.

THE BUDGET

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I wish to make a few remarks about the budget circumstances in which we find ourselves.

Yesterday, we learned that the President has scheduled two summit meetings on the budget this week. The President will meet with Senate Democrats on Wednesday and Republicans on Thursday. By calling this summit, it would seem the President has effectively canceled this week's planned unveiling of a Democratic Senate budget in the Senate Budget Committee that was planned earlier. First it was going to be Monday, then Tuesday, then Wednesday. It looks as if maybe it will not be held this week at all. It might be that Senator CONRAD could do that, but somehow, with this event occurring, he may not.

Regardless of this new discussion period, it is my expectation and belief that the American people should be given a Senate budget plan so it can be examined and we can know what is in it and see what it is about. The American public deserves to know where our elected leaders stand.

I hate to say that we have gone 700-plus days without a budget for the United States of America during a time of the greatest debt increase we have ever faced. We will have doubled the debt of the United States, I believe, by next year in 4 years. We will add \$13 trillion to the debt over the 10 years presented by President Obama's budget that he sent to us in February.

There have been all kinds of discussions and talks and a lot of speeches. The President created a fiscal commission. They came forward with a serious proposal that was worthy of real insight and study. They spent a lot of time on it. It did not go far enough, in my opinion, to reduce our surging growth in spending, but it was intellectually honest, and it offered us some very real suggestions about how we could do better.

Then we started hearing that after the President's budget was submitted and it was received very badly—in fact, it was not helpful at all but actually

made the debt trajectory we are on worse. We had a gang of six Senators who tried to work together to establish a budget plan that might work for us. They met in secret and had ideas. I was interested in what they had to say, but somehow that seems to have gone on the back burner.

Then we had Vice President BIDEN. He is going to lead a discussion with House and Senate Republicans and Democrats, and he is going to work out something.

Now, just yesterday, we heard that the President is going to have another meeting at the White House and talk to us. I hope it is not like the one to which he invited the House Budget Committee chairman, PAUL RYAN, and criticized him, sitting right there in front of him, for producing what I think is a historic budget that would put us on a sound path if followed.

Here we are. We have not gotten a plan or a commitment as to what this administration intends to advocate for. They submitted their budget. It was alleged to have reduced the deficit by \$2 trillion, but when the Congressional Budget Office, our objective analyst, took the document they submitted and studied it in detail, they concluded it would add \$2.7 trillion. In other words, it would create more debt over the next 10 years by \$2.7 trillion than was projected to accrue without the budget. That is not what financial experts are telling us, that is not what economists and professors are telling us we need to do. It is unacceptable.

That budget was criticized, and we hadn't heard much about it since. Well, the President, for a week or so, tried to propose that it would have us live within our means and help pay down the debt. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the lowest deficit in 10 years would be over \$700 billion, and the President said this was going to have us living within our means? Apparently, desiring to back off that, the President made a speech and he said he is now going to save \$4 trillion.

Well, the budget staff—I am ranking Republican on the Budget Committee—looked at what he said in the speech and noticed a couple of things. We noticed the President had moved the budget period from 10 years to 12 years, and that made the numbers look a lot better compared to a 10-year savings plan. If we save a little each year and we go 12 years, it looks better than 10, when everybody was talking about 10. It is kind of a little gimmick, you see, to make the numbers look better. Then they incorrectly took credit for every dollar that was saved when the Republicans in the House negotiated with the Senate on the CR and reduced spending about \$75 billion a year below what the President had asked for. They took credit for that. That was about \$800 billion of the savings.

The net result is, it was not any different than the budget plan he had proposed, except it took credit for the House reduction in spending.

I have to say, the House Republicans—PAUL RYAN—stood and faced the American people and revealed in advance the core of their plan. I attended one press conference in which PAUL RYAN announced the budget he was moving forward with. He had a series of press briefings. He basically said: This is my plan and I am ready to hear any exceptions you have to it, I am prepared to answer your questions, and I am prepared to defend what it is we have done. It was an honest, direct, and responsible approach.

The Ryan budget dealt with the long-term financial threats to America as well as the immediate. The numbers he proposed get us to the point where we can certainly say we are not on the same debt trajectory that put us in such great risk. I believe it is probably the most serious effort I have seen, in the 14 years I have been in the Senate, to address the significant fiscal challenges we face.

We face not only a short-term problem, but we face a long-term, systemic problem. We have an aging population—people drawing more Social Security for longer periods and Medicare for longer periods. We have other entitlement programs. We have been spending extraordinarily. So all that has to be a part of our discussion about how to put this country on a sound path. Senator CONRAD, our Democratic chairman, has done a good job in calling good witnesses. Every expert who has testified before the Budget Committee has told us the truth about the grim circumstances we find ourselves in. They have told us: If you don't act, we could have a debt crisis. They have told us the debt we have already accrued, and which continues to increase, is right now pulling down our economy; that our growth is not what it would be had we not incurred this much debt.

It is uncontroversial that this much debt slows down the economy. When I asked Treasury Secretary Geithner, he agreed with the Rogoff-Reinhart study that says when debt reaches 90 percent of GDP it pulls down economic growth 1 percent. Secretary Geithner said: Yes, that is an excellent study, and I would add one more thing. He said: When we get that much debt, we run the risk of having a debt crisis that could throw us back into some sort of recession or financial problem such as we have had. That was President Obama's Secretary of the Treasury. We know we have a serious problem. We need to do something about it.

The President submitted a budget that has basically been rejected. I can't imagine the Senate would bring it forward as the Senate Democratic budget. The House of Representatives, in accordance with the law and the timeframes of the Budget Act, has produced a budget, showed it publicly before they voted on it, and has defended it since. We haven't had one in the Senate. The Senate, by law, should have produced its budget and started its markup 6 weeks ago. The law says we

are supposed to have passed a budget by April 15—tax day. We haven't even begun to mark it up.

People are attempting, politically, to explain. The Democratic spinmasters are attempting to explain what it is all about. Why are we doing these things? Why hasn't a real budget been produced? They say Republicans are divided. They say: Oh, tea party people and Republicans are all divided. The Republican House has passed a budget. Where is the Democratic Senate? Who is divided? Why can't they produce a document? Why do we have to have the Vice President and the President having meetings and the President giving speeches? Why don't we see a real budget that the American people can see in advance and be able to evaluate and Senators standing, as we are paid to do, and casting votes for or against it? That is what we need to be doing.

I don't agree with the fact that the President is leading. I wish I could say that. Maybe he will surprise us on Thursday with something. I hope so. But I don't sense any leadership at all, because the budget he produced will not do the job. That is the only one we have in the Senate at this point. Indeed, Mr. Erskine Bowles, the man the President chose to head his fiscal commission, said the President's budget came nowhere near doing what is necessary. Actually, what he said was the President's budget goes nowhere near where they will have to go to resolve our fiscal nightmare.

I am wondering what is happening. The American people get it. They sent a message in the elections last November. They sent 64 new Members to the House of Representatives, and every single one of them promised to do something about reckless spending in Washington.

What about this budget the President has submitted to us? It is the only one we have in the Senate. The Senate Democratic leadership hasn't presented one. The President's budget called for a 10.5-percent increase in education, a 9.5-percent increase in energy, a 10.5-percent in the State Department's budget, and a 62-percent increase in the transportation budget. Well, we don't have the money. Forty cents of every \$1 we spend is borrowed. That cannot be continued. We are on an unsustainable path. The American people know it. Every expert has told us. We know it. Where are our leaders in the Senate?

Senator CONRAD, apparently, made a presentation of his budget, and the Republicans have asked Senator CONRAD to present it to us 72 hours before the committee meets. He said he is not going to do that. He made a presentation to the Democratic conference and, apparently, it didn't go well. Senator CONRAD apparently proposed reducing spending more than they liked to hear. The Democratic leader, Senator REID, was sort of critical, actually. He said it was a nice bunch of charts. Obviously, he wasn't happy.

When are we going to see a budget? Are we going to go another 700 days? Are we not going to have a budget this year? The way things should work is like this: The Senate should come forward—the Democratic Senate, because they have the majority and we can pass a budget with a simple majority—and propose a budget that hopefully will get bipartisan support. If not, they stand and say what they believe in and how this budget reflects their vision for America. The House has done that. Then we go to conference committee. After it comes to the floor and is voted on, it goes to the conference committee and differences are worked out. Then it comes back and we have to vote on final passage of an agreed-upon budget.

We have to have a budget. It is time for this country to begin to reverse the reckless trend we are on because we are placing our Nation at risk. Mr. Bowles and Senator Alan Simpson, when they testified before the Budget Committee, warned us we have to do something significant. In the written statement they both signed, they said we are facing the most predictable economic crisis in our history. When asked when that could occur, Mr. Bowles said 2 years, maybe. Alan Simpson said: I think maybe 1. We are not talking about our grandchildren. I am talking about now.

What I would just say is, I think it is time for us to go back to regular order. We have tried a lot of different approaches to confront this crisis we face. It seems to me our leadership in the Senate is desperately seeking to avoid having to do what is responsible; that is, to stand and produce a budget. If they aren't prepared to stand before the American people and tell them how they think the country ought to be run and where the money ought to be spent and how much ought to be collected, then they are not leading, it seems to me.

I am very disappointed in the President's leadership. He has been roundly criticized because the only proposal he has sent to us is irresponsible. It in no way comes close, as Mr. Bowles said, to doing what is necessary to avoid our fiscal nightmare, and that is the path we are headed toward. It is not a matter of dispute. We will not reach 10, 15 years down the road spending like we are because we will have a catastrophe before then.

Alan Greenspan, the former head of the Federal Reserve, said he thought maybe some sort of compromise would be reached that would be good for the country. The only question, he said, was whether it would be before or after a debt crisis occurs. This was a few weeks ago that Alan Greenspan was saying this.

It is a challenge for us and a challenge for the leadership in this Senate to come before the American people and produce their plan and seek support on the floor of the Senate. Let's debate it. Let's have amendments offered. Let's go to conference, and some-

how, some way hammer out a budget that will put this country on a better path. We have no other choice. It is the defining moment for this Congress. We have no higher duty than to confront the dangerous fiscal path we are on.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that at 2:15 today the Senate proceed to executive session and begin consideration of Executive Calendar No. 61, the nomination of Edward Chen of California to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of California under the previous order.

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

Mr. REID. Madam President, there will be 3 hours of debate on the Chen nomination beginning at 2:15 p.m. today. Senators can expect a rollcall vote on the Chen nomination at approximately 5:15 p.m. today.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arkansas.

FLOODING AND FEMA

Mr. PRYOR. Madam President, I will speak in morning business for 10 minutes or less. Let me talk about a couple things this morning. First, I wish to talk about something my State has been going through since mid-March and has continued to the present day. We have been battered by tornadoes and high winds and now flooding. We see this in a photo that was taken a few days ago, late last week, of one of the areas in our State underwater. We have had many towns that have been evacuated, many counties have been declared disaster areas. In fact, the Corps of Engineers showed me a map on Friday when I met with them. They have a map that is a large overview that starts down near Dallas, TX, pretty much through all the State of Arkansas, then a little bit of Missouri and Tennessee and Illinois and even, I think, a little bit into Kentucky.

The folks in those areas in that oval have received six times the normal rainfall. When we have six times the normal rainfall, this is what we get. This is a photo where we can see the water is in the house and up on the front porch. These folks are underwater, similar to a lot of people in our State.

I will say this. The Governor of our State is doing all any Governor can do. He is doing a great job. Even though we have Interstate 40 underwater right now in one area where the White River goes under Interstate 40, they are trying very hard to get that open, maybe even today if the water will cooperate. We are seeing a lot of emergency response in our State, seeing neighbor helping neighbor, churches are rolling out, we have seen folks doing everything they can to make this work.

Also, I thank the Corps of Engineers. It is easy for us to beat up on the Corps