

I want to illustrate this with a chart. This is where we are today. This is debt as a share of the economy. As I said before, if you look at historical averages, what we have carried in the form of debt, in World War II, obviously, there was a big ramp-up because we had to finance the war and coming out of the war. As the economy started to expand and we got spending under control, the debt, as a percentage of our economy, started to come down to historical averages, which is where it stayed for about 40 to 50 years. It started to spike in the last couple of years, as we have seen spending increases. The reason is because the amount we spend as a percentage of our total economy has continued to tick up.

I mentioned earlier that we are looking at—what was the number—25.9 percent of GDP is what we will spend on the Federal Government in 2020, according to the CBO's alternative fiscal scenario. If you think about that, the amount we have spent historically as a percent of our economy on the Federal Government is 20.6 percent. That has been the 40-year average. We are going from 20.6 spending as a percent of our economy—the amount the Federal Government spends for our entire economic output—to 25.9 percent a decade from now. It continues to spike up. Because we are having to finance so much spending with borrowing, the borrowing level will increase dramatically, to the point where we are looking at debt to GDP—if we don't take steps to change, this is what we are looking at on this chart. It is a straight up spike in the amount of borrowing to GDP. This is pointed out too by where we are currently; right now, we are running somewhere in the \$1.4 trillion to \$1.6 trillion in annual deficits on \$3.8 trillion in total spending, which means that out of every dollar the Federal Government is spending, we are borrowing over 40 cents.

Can you imagine any family or business in this country that could continue to get by borrowing literally over 40 cents out of every dollar they spend? You cannot do it. That would be like the average family in this country having an annual income of about \$60,000 and spending \$110,000. You cannot do that. The Federal Government has been doing that for way too long. That is why we have to take on this issue of spending and debt.

Some people argue that we don't have enough revenue, we need to raise taxes, and that is the way to deal with this fiscal crisis to get more revenue coming into the Federal Government. I argue that, based upon these facts, this is not a revenue problem, this is a spending problem. The reason we are where we are is not because we don't have enough revenue, it is because we are spending dramatically more as a percentage of our economy than we have in the last 40 to 50 years. The historical average is 20.6 percent over the last 40 years—what we have spent on the Federal Government as a percent-

age of our entire economy—and today that is 24 percent, and by 2020 we are looking at over 25 percent—an increase of 25 percent in the amount we are spending on the Federal Government as a percentage of our entire economy. That is a spending problem, not a revenue problem.

We need to address this and recognize it, and we need to understand that the only way we can fix it is to deal with what is driving that spending. It is Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. Those programs comprise 55 to 60 percent of all of government spending. Absent reforms to those programs, this is what we will end up with; this is where we will be as a nation. That is certainly someplace I don't think most Americans want to go.

The other reason is critically important. I have said this before, and I will say it again. It has implications not only for future generations but in the here and now. One is that when you are carrying this kind of debt to GDP, sustaining this kind of debt level, it impacts your economy's ability to create jobs, because you are crowding out private investment that otherwise would be allocated to more productive uses, and you are spending it on the government. You are also impacting interest rates and inflation in ways that could be counter to the economic expansion, growth, and job creation in this country. There has been a great amount of research and study that has gone into at what level does that start to take away from economic growth, economic expansion, and job creation?

Two people who have recently put out a book; Carmen Reinhart and Kenneth Rogoff have suggested, from their study of developed countries over the last half century, that when your debt to GDP reaches 90 percent, it is costing you about 1 percentage point of economic growth every year. In this country, losing 1 percentage point of economic growth costs us about a million jobs. If we say we are serious about job creation, one of the problems we ought to focus on is getting spending and debt under control. If we sustain and carry this kind of debt level for the foreseeable future, we are going to cost the economy 1 percent of economic growth and, therefore, a significant amount of jobs that might have been created by that economy. That is one reason we need to rein it in.

The statement has been made repeatedly by ADM Mike Mullen that the greatest threat to our national security is our national debt. I would say that the national security implications are very real as well. When you have the highest ranking military official saying the greatest threat to America's national security is our national debt, that is a stunning statement. I think it speaks volumes about why it is important to get this issue under control.

One of the reasons he says that, obviously, is that so much of the debt is held by foreign countries, all of which have additional leverage on us because

we owe them so much money. We need to get spending under control and get the debt dealt with. That starts with entitlement reform. I hope the discussions currently occurring between the White House and some of the leaders here in the Congress will come to a result where we can work together and use this as an opportunity to, once and for all, put this country back on a fiscal track that will ensure that future generations are not burdened and saddled with an enormous amount of debt and an economy that is saddled with that weight and not able to create the jobs to get people back to work and to grow and prosper and create a higher quality of living and standard of living for the next generation.

I ask unanimous consent that the time of the quorum call be divided equally on both sides, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

OFFSHORE DRILLING

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, today the Senate is going to consider a bill to increase offshore drilling. This is the Republican response to the Nation's need for a national energy policy and to rising gasoline prices. I believe the Republican approach to this will be unsuccessful. I believe it overlooks some very fundamental and basic facts, and the facts are these: We cannot drill our way out of our problem. If we take a look at all the known oil reserves in the United States offshore and onshore—all of them—they comprise 2 percent of the known oil reserves in the world—2 percent. Now take a look at how much oil the United States consumes each year: 25 percent of the world oil production.

The Republican answer is drill, baby, drill. Honestly, that is not going to solve the problem, and it is going to invite some dangerous activities that we should know better than to engage in. It has not been that long ago that 170 million gallons of oil poured out of a well that was improperly drilled by BP in the Gulf of Mexico. The devastation that followed to the local economy and to the environment is virtually incalculable. Have we learned a lesson—a lesson that safety should be the hallmark when it comes to drilling; that we ought to make certain that before

we go into an environment which is precious, where an accident could create some unknown hazard or danger, that we thoroughly investigate that in advance. That is not too much to ask. We know what is going on in the Gulf of Mexico today as the economy is still trying to recover.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle who produced the McConnell approach—the drill, baby, drill approach—want to just forget the spill. They want us to rush into drilling with the same reckless practices that led to the spill in the first place. This is not going to solve the problem. In fact, it may create more problems.

If passed, the Republican bill would require the Secretary of the Interior to evaluate a permit application in 60 days regardless of its complexity—60 days. If the Secretary cannot make a decision within 60 days, the permit is automatically approved even if it contains potential environmental and safety risks. This arbitrary deadline makes it impossible for regulators to do the in-depth scientific analysis needed to accurately evaluate the risks and safety requirements for every application.

The bill also mandates the sale of offshore oil and gas leases in the Gulf of Mexico, off the coast of Virginia, and the Arctic Ocean—sales that were postponed in order to investigate the potential environmental impact.

Not only does the Republican bill not add any new protocols to ensure that increased drilling will be safe, it revokes some of the additional requirements that were instituted following the BP spill. They have not learned any lesson from what happened in the Gulf of Mexico. Essentially, this bill would lead to more offshore drilling, with less safety and regulation of the industry. One would think that the BP oil spill never happened, if we consider this bill, which will be on the floor later today.

There is really no reason to rush to begin new drilling projects in such an irresponsible manner because under President Obama, domestic oil production has grown to its highest level in the last 7 years. That is right, it has grown to its highest level in the last 7 years. If one listened to the other side, one would think the opposite was true—that we cut back or stopped drilling. Since February, 34 permits for 14 unique deepwater wells have been issued under the new safety requirements since the BP spill. Oil production in Federal waters has increased in both of the last 2 years.

Last weekend, the President announced several steps the administration would take to expand further responsible development of domestic energy resources. The Department of the Interior will hold lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico and Alaska by mid-2012, once additional analyses have been completed. Extensions will be granted to all leases offered by the deepwater suspension, as well as delayed leases in Alaska. Annual oil and gas lease sales

will be held in Alaska's National Petroleum Reserve. And the mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic coast will undergo an expedited review for fuel resources. The President's actions show we are continuing to expand our domestic resources responsibly.

This careless Republican bill is unnecessary. It is bad policy. The bill proposed by Senator McCONNELL would force us to disregard all the lessons we learned from the tragic oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico a year ago.

It has been many years back when I was up in Alaska when the Exxon Valdez ran aground in the Prince William Sound and dumped tens of thousands of barrels of crude oil into this beautiful place in our world. I was up there, and we had workers out. They were literally swabbing up the oil off the rocks as it washed up on the shore. They wore these yellow slickers, which in no time at all were covered with this black crude oil. People with cameras were running around taking photos of the workers.

I went over to an old fellow in one of those yellow slickers who had these big swaddling cloths, mopping up the crude oil that had been dumped into this beautiful place of Prince William Sound. I said to him after the cameras left: Do you think this is helping? He said: Well, I think if we didn't do anything, God would take care of this in about 10 years. By taking extra effort, maybe it will be 9 years and 6 months.

The point I am making is this: Once the spill has taken place, it takes time for nature to restore itself, if it can. In Prince William Sound, some species of fish never returned. I do not know what will happen in the Gulf of Mexico. Perhaps over time nature will heal this wound. I hope it does.

Do we not have a special responsibility as stewards of this planet Earth and of this Nation to be careful? Is it too much to ask that we engage in fuel efficiency and thoughtful energy policy rather than recklessly drill in every direction without asking the hard questions, without taking the time for an honest analysis? Not only did the BP oil spill despoil that area, it claimed human lives. When it comes to safety and environmental responsibility, we should not be cutting corners such as the Republican bill would do.

At the end of the day, even if they could drill every place they wanted to drill with no questions asked, it would have virtually no impact on gasoline prices. Oil prices are set in the global market, and we cannot change them simply by attempting to increase oil production when it comes to only 2 percent of the known oil reserves.

Given the President's recent action and steady increase of production, this bill is pointless and dangerous. For this reason, I urge my colleagues not to support it and to vote against this measure that will be offered later today.

BELARUS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, it was last February that I went to Belarus. I had been invited to go to Lithuania to speak to the Parliament on the 20th anniversary of their independence from the Soviet Union, and I took a second trip into Minsk, Belarus, a neighbor nation, because there was a political crisis. It was February, and since the Presidential election in the December before, there had been a wholesale effort by Lukashenko, the leader of Belarus, to imprison his political opponents.

With so many significant events going on in the Middle East, there is an understandable risk that we lose sight of events happening in countries such as Belarus. In Belarus, under Aleksandr Lukashenko, if you have the temerity to run for President or protest a fraudulent election, you will find yourself thrown in a KGB jail where you are likely to face torture and harsh prison sentences. If this sounds like a throwback to the Cold War in the Soviet Union, that is exactly what it is. Not only is Belarus a throwback to the worst political abuses of the old Soviet era, but the government's enforcers of this bankrupt system still call their police the KGB.

On Saturday, the Lukashenko regime continued its nightmare of totalitarian rule when it convicted one of the country's opposition Presidential candidates and former Foreign Minister Andrei Sannikov to 5 years in prison. You see, Mr. Sannikov had the temerity to run against the dictator of Europe, Lukashenko. Because of that, even having lost the election, he is going to pay for it by spending 5 years in prison.

This photograph shows Mr. Sannikov in the defendant's cage during his trial in the Belarusian capital of Minsk. They put him in a cage. Can anyone think of a more telling symbol of Lukashenko's tyranny than a sham court proceeding with a KGB cage? His crime? This man ran for President of his country.

In December last year, after nearly two decades of unchecked power, Lukashenko decided he would have an open election—in his words, an open election. Many took him at his word and decided they would run for President. Apparently, Lukashenko did not care for that idea. His idea of an election is that no one runs against you. So he staged a sham election and then arrested 5 of the 6 Presidential candidates and more than 600 peaceful demonstrators after the election.

I visited Belarus some weeks afterward. I met with the family members of these brave candidates and activists. I have to tell you, it was a moving experience. The meeting included members of Mr. Sannikov's family. This is a photo we took in the office of the U.S. consulate in Minsk, in Belarus. It shows Kanstantsin Sannikov, Ala Sannikava, and Lyutsina Khalip. Kanstantsin and Ala are Mr. Sannikov's son and mother.