

We will have the opportunity to debate and make improvements, but only if we vote to proceed to the bill. But you know what, arms are going to be broken all over the place here this week to make sure that does not happen, because this is not a serious attempt to try to fix the problem. This is all about messaging for campaigns and political consequences. The reality is no plan is going to get enough votes. I will stand here and I will observe those arms getting broken. We will need orthopedic surgeons on the Senate floor to fix them.

Sadly, passage was never the intention here. These plans were scheduled for votes purely for the sake of messaging an important program that provides health care for seniors that by the Congressional Budget Office's definition will be insolvent in 9 short years. These votes are not designed to fix this problem. These votes, I guarantee, are all about political fodder for next year's election season.

I believe this is not what we were elected to do on the Senate floor. These antics are what rightfully embolden those who say Congress is incapable of solving these very hard problems. As the Senator from South Dakota indicated, today we mark 756 days since the Senate passed a budget. As a former Governor I cannot imagine going to the people of the great State of Nebraska and saying: You know, I have been thinking about it, we will not be doing a budget this year. I would be looking for a new State to live in.

Well, 756 days, and this week we are not even making a serious attempt to deal with it. With a deficit exceeding \$14 trillion, our Nation needs something greater than political symbolic votes which we all know will fail. Maybe, just maybe, we can muster the courage to take seriously our responsibility to seniors and to all Americans. I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak to my colleagues as in morning business for 30 minutes.

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

THE BUDGET

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, on February 14 President Obama delivered his budget to the Congress. I often describe to my constituents that Washington is an island surrounded by reality. Nowhere is this more apparent than with President Obama's February 14 budget. In presenting and defending his budget, President Obama and his staff have said his budget "lives within our means" and that "it will not add to the debt," and that "we are not going to spend any more money than we are taking in."

Obviously all you have to do is study the budget and you come to the conclu-

sion that these astonishing statements do not equal the facts. The Congressional Budget Office recently projected the deficit for fiscal year 2011, the year we are in, will exceed \$1.5 trillion. This is on top of a \$1 trillion-plus deficit in 2009 and 2010. Today, of every dollar spent, more than 40 cents is borrowed. Our country is on an unsustainable path. But you would not realize that by looking at the President's budget proposal. It does not recognize the serious fiscal crisis our country faces. What it represents is the status quo.

Over the 10-year period, President Obama's budget adds more than \$10 trillion in publicly held debt and \$14 trillion in gross debt. Does that sound like on February 14 he put before us a budget such that we are going to live within our means and not spend any more than we take in?

During this period of time, going up to 2021, debt held by the public would reach 87 percent of GDP, compared to a 50-year average of 35 percent. According to the Congressional Budget Office, "If those trends were continued beyond 2021, the resulting path of the Federal debt would be unsustainable."

In fact, CBO estimated that by the year 2040, under President Obama's budget, debt held by the public would be 117 percent. Is this the budget the Senate Democrats will support? Is this the fiscal path we are going to endorse? While President Obama claims we are living within our means, the smallest annual deficit will be \$748 billion. His budget does not even begin to put our country on the right path. The final 3 years of his budget have annual deficits totaling over \$1 trillion.

As former Comptroller General David Walker has stated, our country was founded on principles such as limited government, individual liberty, and fiscal responsibility.

The President's budget falls short on each of these three principles. It increases spending. It grows government as a percentage of our economy. It is clearly fiscally irresponsible, and because of the legacy of deficits and debt it creates, it will undoubtedly infringe upon the liberties of future generations.

In 2006, then-Senator Obama argued against raising the debt limit. He believed, at that time, the very need to raise the debt limit was a sign of leadership failure. By his own standard then, President Obama is not living up to his standard. So is that leadership failure? Would he admit that today? His "no" vote in that year was to make a point about needing to get serious about fiscal discipline. We are in the third year of President Obama's Presidency. We are in the midst of the third consecutive year of \$1 trillion of annual deficit. Deficits have gotten larger, not smaller.

Of course, I recognize many of my Democratic colleagues will come to the floor and argue they support the policies President Obama put forth in a speech later on—I guess in April—at

George Washington University. Unfortunately, for the Democrats, the leader of their party doesn't deliver speeches in legislative text. Speeches alone aren't going to solve the big problems we face in this Nation. We need serious solutions to our country's very serious problems. We need real leadership. The future generations of this country deserve no less, and that is what House budget Chairman RYAN has offered. That is what our colleagues on our side of the aisle, such as Senator TOOMEY and Senator PAUL, are going to offer to the Senate.

What have the Democrats offered to address the looming fiscal crisis? The answer is no resolution at all. So I have a blank page, representing the fact that they have no plan whatsoever. Are they going to allow a debate so they can offer their ideas to address our fiscal calamities? We just heard the Senator from Nebraska postulate that is not going to happen; that we are having a series of votes, but they are for show, not for real. The American people have sent 53 Democratic Senators to Washington. A budget can pass the Senate with just 51 votes. It doesn't take the supermajority 60 votes that so many issues on the floor require if we are going to get to finality. So far, we can see they have shirked their responsibility—nothing.

It has been more than 750 days since Senate Democrats offered a budget. What is the delay? I want to ask them: Where is your budget? I suppose they will argue that our Nation's fiscal situation doesn't require a budget or, perhaps, they have simply run out of ideas to address our deficits and our debt.

ADM Mike Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said earlier this year that our debt—meaning our national debt, our accumulative debt—is the greatest threat to our national security. Surely, the Senate Democratic leadership would want to put an honest plan forward to address that threat. They don't even want to debate a budget.

This exercise is on a motion to proceed to a number of budgets, none of which were written by the Democratic majority. I guess they intend to vote against proceeding. They don't even want to debate a budget. Well, by this time, most of the time in the last 35 years, we have had a budget through the Senate. Instead of leading, they would rather demagogue the serious efforts put forth by Republicans. They are not going to stand and defend the defenseless budget their President submitted to Congress just 3 months ago. They are not going to write their own budget. It is still blank. They are not even going to vote to allow debate on budgets that were drafted by others. So are we witnessing a leadership failure similar to the one Senator Obama referred to in 2006, in his speech on the Senate floor? The Democratic majority would rather demagogue Medicare than produce and defend their own budget.

I presume there will be a lot of speeches in this town today, with

Democrats hitting their chests saying: We ran an election in New York State yesterday based upon the fact that Republicans want to kill Medicare. Well, I wish to put forth the fact that if we do nothing, as the trustees have said recently, there isn't going to be any Medicare in 9 years. I can put forth ample evidence that ObamaCare puts Medicare on a path to the rationing of care and reducing the number of doctors who are going to take Medicare patients. Already, Medicare is on a path to destruction if we don't intervene and do something about it. The sooner we intervene, the better. We ought to be intervening now in a bipartisan way instead of all the talk about partisanship and destroying it. There are some people in this Congress who know Medicare is a problem and the sooner we deal with it, the easier it will be to deal with it.

Medicare is a very important part of America's social fabric. It was intended to be that in 1966, and it is still that today. I intend to work to make sure it stays as a part of our social fabric. It is a commitment made to seniors today, and it is a commitment made to people who are not yet seniors today. It is a commitment made to all for the future. So it is very important that we, as stewards of the Medicare Program, take serious our charge to make sure it remains for future seniors.

With that in mind, I come to the floor to call out the most dangerous threat to the Medicare Program we face on the floor this week. Let's be clear. It is not the budget resolution authored by Congressman PAUL RYAN and passed by the House of Representatives. The most serious threat to the Medicare Program this week is those who propose to do nothing or offer no plan whatsoever for saving Medicare. Doing nothing is the most serious threat to Medicare. For all the talk about killing Medicare as we know it, the Democrats' do-nothing budget I have held up so often—the do-nothing budget—is the surest way to kill Medicare as we know it.

The folks coming to the Senate floor with nothing in their hands but criticism of these budget resolutions are irresponsible. By attacking the House budget resolution while proposing absolutely nothing, the Democrats are plunging their collective heads into the sand such as these ostriches sometimes are described as doing—ostriches acting as though everything with Medicare is fine and that doing nothing is a viable option.

Let's look at the facts. Last week, the CMS Actuary—and this is a professional person. He is not a political person but the President's Actuary—submitted his annual report on the fiscal health of the Medicare Program. Frankly, his conclusions are very disturbing. The Actuary confirms that the Medicare Program is already contributing to the Federal deficit. It is spending more than it takes in, and it will continue to do so throughout the com-

ing decade. The Actuary found—this professional person, this person that is the President's Actuary—found that Medicare will run out of money by the year 2024—5 years faster than his projection last year. For the sixth straight year, the report issued a funding warning showing that the Medicare Program is taking a disproportionate share of its funding from general revenue, thus crowding out programs such as defense and education. The situation is only going to get worse.

In 1965, when Medicare was created, baby boomers retiring today were then just teenagers. Today, we have 10,000 baby boomers retiring every day, with fewer and fewer workers paying into Medicare to support these additional retirees. The average couple turning 65 today paid over \$109,000 into Medicare over their lifetime but will receive over \$343,000 in benefits. Stop to think of that. Everybody wonders why Medicare might be in trouble today. The average person retiring today has paid in \$109,000 but will receive about \$343,000 in benefits. That just does not add up as a sustainable program. Anybody who says we don't have to do anything about Medicare and it will take care of itself—well, we can see how misleading that is.

When Medicare was created in 1966, the average American lived to be age 70. Today, thanks to incredible advances in medical care, the average American lives to be 79. These are the facts. So now, knowing these facts, is the time for Congress to recognize the reality of Medicare's fiscal crisis—and not just recognize it but recognize it and then do something about it.

Put simply, Medicare is unsustainable without serious, thoughtful action. This blank sheet of paper, a budget not being offered, is not a serious, thoughtful action. To say otherwise is to ignore the facts and to stick your head in the sand.

The Ryan budget, as it relates to Medicare, has had much discussion lately. It is simply a blueprint. Even if this page were filled in, a budget never becomes law; it never goes to the President of the United States. It is a discipline for the Congress of the United States. It does not become law. So anybody who says voting for a budget is voting to do something to Medicare is crazy. Actual policy, as we know, is going to be determined by other committees, other than the Budget Committee. In the House, it is most often the Ways and Means Committee. In the Senate, it is the Senate Finance Committee. Those are the committees that write the bill and that can say what is happening or not happening to Medicare. Anyone telling the public that if this budget blueprint is adopted, it will be a law doesn't understand how the legislative process works.

But this vote isn't even about a budget blueprint. The debate we are having is about a simple motion on whether we ought to even debate a budget. If the Democrats were willing to proceed

to an honest and open debate, we could talk about where we want to go with the Medicare Program at that time. If the Democrats were willing to proceed to an honest and open debate, we could debate steps to save the program. If the Democrats were willing to proceed to an honest and open debate, we could have amendments to improve the resolution as offered. Of course, the Democrats are not willing to proceed to an open and honest debate.

I agree that changing the nature of Medicare is a significant step. Requiring people who are 10 years away from retirement to expect to pay more for their health care in retirement is a significant change in policy. It should be thoughtfully considered, however, in the context of Medicare's serious fiscal difficulties. They aren't going to go away.

Describing this policy as ending Medicare for seniors is irresponsible and factually false. People who engage in this type of demagoguery are endangering coverage for the very people whom they claim to support because they continue to propose nothing. Where is the Democrats' bill? So far, this is it: a blank piece of paper, producing nothing.

I have great respect for the chairman of the Senate Budget Committee. I know he has tried to produce a budget. But, apparently, his leadership thinks that demagoguing Republican budgets is far more politically profitable than standing behind one of their own plans, so they have squashed all his efforts to produce a budget. Even though we know the Democrats have turned into ostriches when it comes to saving Medicare, we are fortunate to have a record over the past several years to examine.

So let's look at ObamaCare, passed solely in a partisan vote in 2010. It took a little more than \$500 billion right out of the Medicare Program to fund a new entitlement. So Medicare is in trouble. Take away \$500 billion from it, and start up a new program. Does that sound fiscally responsible? I have no doubt some folks may come to the floor to argue that the Medicare savings extended the life of the Medicare Program. But every reputable source that has analyzed that claim has appropriately tagged it as double counting.

The CMS Actuary, whom I referred to in the past, today continues to call some of the productivity cuts made by the Democrats in their health care reform bill unsustainable and unrealistic. And I say—he does not say it—I say it is going to bring rationing. So down the road, what sort of health care are seniors going to have? It is not going to be what they know today.

Of course, we all know the Democrats failed to resolve the sustainable growth rate problem, which is a formula for doctors' reimbursement, so the problem of physician payments continues to haunt the fiscal future of Medicare. If we do not do anything this year,

Medicare physicians will face a 30-percent pay cut. Imagine that. Today many Medicare patients already are being denied the care and personal choice they deserve because the AMA, the American Medical Association, has said one in three primary doctors is limiting Medicare patients, and more than one in eight of those doctors is forced to deny Medicare patients altogether.

Our seniors already face the pain of a broken Medicare system. Yet the Democrats remain ostriches with their heads in the sand because they have no Medicare solutions they want to offer.

Perhaps I am being too hard on the Democrats. President Obama—perhaps speaking for the Democrats or perhaps not—has put an option on the table for addressing Medicare spending. He did it in a speech at George Washington University on December 13. Of course, we will not be able to vote on that here today because, as Senator MCCONNELL said yesterday, you cannot vote for a speech. But at least we should consider the option the President put on the table.

In his speech, President Obama suggested we should control costs in Medicare by tasking the Independent Payment Advisory Board that was set up under ObamaCare to do even more than what we proposed a year and a half ago when the bill was passed.

You might ask, What is the Independent Payment Advisory Board in ObamaCare? Well, it was created by the Democrats' health care bill. It is a 15-member panel of unelected advisers who would make binding recommendations on how to reduce Medicare spending when spending is projected to exceed a certain level. Effectively, their recommendations have the force of law without congressional intervention to replace the cuts they might suggest and that under the law would take a 60-percent majority. And you know it is very difficult to get 60 votes in this body for any one thing.

That law says the board cannot make decisions that directly relate to premiums, deductibles, or copayments that Medicare beneficiaries pay. It says the board cannot change the eligibility criteria for Medicare benefits. So then, what can the board do, you may ask? Well, it is going to zero in on provider payments, doctor payments.

I want to repeat a statistic I quoted earlier because after the payment review board gets done, you are going to have more than the one in three primary doctors not taking Medicare patients that presently is the situation. We have one out of eight doctors denying Medicare patients altogether. In other words, they are not going to see Medicare patients; and that is today. It is going to get worse when this payment review board gets done.

According to the Joint Economic Committee, today Medicare allows medical providers to collect 89 percent of the cost of services provided to seniors. Under the President's proposal, by

2022, Medicare providers will only be allowed to collect 66 percent of the cost of services provided to seniors. Reductions will clearly restrict seniors' access to quality health care.

Let me sum up what we do know about the Democrats' actions on Medicare because it is already on a path to destruction. So, of course, I get a little bit upset when I hear people on the other side of the aisle saying Republicans want to do away with Medicare, when it is part of the social fabric of America and we want to keep it as part of the social fabric of America and we want to do it not only because it is a Federal program, but we want to do it because it is tied in with a lot of corporate retirement health plans where it becomes a primary payer and the corporate health plan becomes a secondary or additional payer.

I sum up by saying, they have enacted already \$500 billion worth of cuts to fund a new entitlement called ObamaCare. Many of those cuts are described by the independent CMS Actuary as unsustainable. They have yet to find a way to fix the doctor reimbursement formula called the sustainable growth rate. And still, the President has proposed further reducing payments to providers.

Of course, what is that going to do for seniors in America? It is going to reduce access. This will make it harder for seniors to find providers willing to treat them. This will drive some providers out of the business of providing services to seniors. In other words, they cannot afford it.

There is one simple word to describe this approach, and it is a word I do not take lightly. The word is "rationing" of health care for seniors in America. It may not be direct overt rationing, but you have to have your head buried very deeply in the sand not to realize that is going to be the outcome of policies already put in place by this President through ObamaCare. And then they want to accuse us of destroying Medicare?

So I get back to what today's debate is all about. I think we ought to seriously be having a legitimate floor debate rather than a series of political show votes today. I will vote for the Senate to begin debate on the Ryan budget and the other Republican budgets as they are offered because I do not have a chance to vote on anything from that side of the aisle because, see, it is a blank sheet of paper. There is nothing there that the majority party—not the minority party; they are the majority party—has suggested. I will vote to begin debate, not that I support any of their budgets in their entirety. I will vote to begin debate because our fiscal situation demands serious efforts or giving serious considerations, and in no area, as I have made clear in my remarks today, is this more critical than in Medicare because Medicare is on a path to bankruptcy.

People who support the Medicare Program and care about those who will

count on that program today and for many years to come are willing to put serious plans on the table for debate. It is our responsibility to ensure Medicare's survival for future seniors. Doing nothing is worse for Medicare. The surest way to kill Medicare as we know it is the Democrats' do-nothing plan. Demagoguery is irresponsible. So I would suggest: Pull your head out of the sand and join a real debate to save Medicare for the future.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. 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. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that following my remarks, Senator MCCASKILL be recognized to speak for up to 15 minutes, and following her remarks Senator SESSIONS be recognized to speak for up to 20 minutes.

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

SMALL BUSINESS ADDITIONAL TEMPORARY EXTENSION ACT OF 2011

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to concur in the House message to accompany S. 990, which the clerk will report by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 990, an Act to provide for an additional temporary extension of programs under the Small Business Act and the Small Business Investment Act of 1958, and for other purposes, with an amendment.

Pending:

Reid motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the bill, with Reid amendment No. 347, of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 348 (to amendment No. 347), to change the enactment date.

Reid motion to refer the message of the House on the bill to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship with instructions, Reid amendment No. 349, to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 350 (to (the instructions) amendment No. 349), of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 351 (to amendment No. 350), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FRANKEN). The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 10 minutes.