

Sunday, on one of the big news programs, his new Chief of Staff, Bill Daley, balked at a Republican plan to cut spending for the rest of the year. He said any budget cuts must be paired with new spending—"investments," as he and the President called them. He taunted the Republicans, I think, with, "Where's the beef? Let's see the cuts they're talking about."

The President refuses to lead and then sends his emissaries to attack any Republican who makes a serious proposal and, I assume, as being heartless and wanting to throw children in the streets, and so forth. For instance, the President's chief economic adviser, Austan Goolsbee, lashed out at Republicans for wanting to reduce discretionary spending before we raise the debt ceiling. We have to have some sort of bipartisan agreement before we agree to raise this debt ceiling that we are going to reduce some of the spending, clip back on the credit card a little bit, something significant.

The President's own Secretary of the Treasury, Tim Geithner, recently argued that it was too early to begin cutting the deficit. So it is unsustainable, but it is too early to start cutting it now—maybe in 2012, or after that, maybe. Geithner's comments ring all too similar to those of his predecessor, Hank Paulson, Secretary of the Treasury under President Bush, who said the housing downturn was under control, before the Wall Street firms began falling like dominoes.

But ignoring the reality of our situation does not change it. The money simply isn't there to support the President's spending agenda that he announced at the State of the Union Address. We don't have the money. Our Nation cannot afford another era of big government.

In 2 weeks, on February 14—just 2 weeks from now—the President will submit a new budget to Congress. He will go to our Budget Committee. This may be—and I say this seriously—his last chance to get it right, for the President to be a credible voice in this debate. He must put forward a budget that significantly lowers spending levels. He cannot present Congress with the same unserious plan he presented last Tuesday night.

Three years into his turn, I think this budget he will be submitting is a defining act of what he views and how he views the debt we face. I think if this budget fails to meet the necessary demands for curtailing spending, we will know pretty conclusively where the President is.

Numbers count. You can have rhetoric and we can disagree, but at some point you have to put out your budget that says what you are going to do, how much you are going to spend, and where you are going to get the money—in this case, how much we are going to borrow to carry on the government at that time. So we are going to see whether the President is moving with the American people to fiscal and

economic sanity or whether he will continue his ideological commitment to big government. I think that is it. I think we will know in 2 weeks. It is a serious matter.

So I think we need to turn back from the cliff toward which we are heading and get on a new road. We need to reduce both the size of the deficit, and we will have to reduce the size of the government somewhat. We are not going to sink into the ocean. If we go back to 2008, 2006 levels of Federal spending, will the country collapse? Give me a break. Certainly, it is not going to collapse, but it will put us on a road to fiscal sanity. It will restore not only public confidence in our economy, but it will restore the foundations of American prosperity.

I truly believe one of the clouds over the American economy is the perception—unfortunately, too true—that we are spending at a reckless rate, that we are irresponsibly running up the debt, and that could cause us to inflate the value of our currency, that could cause a debt crisis, which Mr. Greenspan said was almost a 50-50 chance in the next 2 to 3 years. If you have money to invest, what does that say to you? Maybe you better sit back and see a little more until we get this debt—that is spiraling out of control—under control. Until we are headed on a downward path toward a balanced budget, we are not going to see the economic growth that is possible. I think that is where we should be heading.

So strong, sustained reductions in spending will not be easy. It will take us down a tough road, but it is the only road, the only course that will lead to a better financial future for ourselves and our children and preserving the integrity of the U.S. economy in a way that is necessary for growth to occur.

I thank the Chair, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COONS). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

EARNED-INCOME TAX CREDIT AWARENESS DAY

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, this past Friday marked the annual Earned-Income Tax Credit Awareness Day. I rise to recognize the success and importance of this vital tax benefit for hard-working Americans.

As our country continues its steady recovery from the worst economic conditions hard-working American men and women have faced since the Great Depression, families need financial relief and many people need jobs.

As we renew our efforts to promote job creation, increase access to credit for small businesses, and restore confidence and stability to markets, we

should not forget that we already have what one President once called "the best anti-poverty, the best pro-family, the best job-creation measure to come out of Congress." President Ronald Reagan was talking about the earned-income tax credit.

Since 1975, the EITC has helped to offset the impact of Social Security taxes for low- and moderate-income individuals. Nearly 26 million taxpayers across the country received the EITC when they filed their tax returns last year. In Hawaii alone, over 100,000 low- and middle-income workers received an average of nearly \$2,000 for this tremendous tax benefit. These vital EITC resources help families pay for essentials such as food, housing, clothing, transportation, and education expenses.

The earned-income tax credit is more important now than ever before. With many Americans still out of work, some families accustomed to budgeting based on the earnings of two people are struggling to survive on the income of one. Some people in Hawaii and across the country who are working new, lower paying jobs may be eligible for the earned-income tax credit for the first time.

To be clear, every taxpayer who receives the EITC is hard working because the earned-income tax credit is only provided to Americans who work for a living. The EITC encourages individuals to find work, support themselves and their families, and improve their quality of life.

A few years ago, only one in five taxpayers eligible for the EITC claimed their benefits. Since then, tremendous progress has been made. The number has risen to four in five, thanks in part to the tireless work of taxpayer consumer advisers and advocates in our communities.

Our goal now should be to see to it that all eligible taxpayers claim their EITC benefits this year. That would mean in Hawaii alone about 34,000 more taxpayers would receive much needed financial relief, with similar results across the country.

I plan to reintroduce the Taxpayer Abuse Prevention Act in this 112th Congress. My bill is intended to protect low- and middle-income taxpayers from falling victim to unscrupulous lenders. Historically, many EITC recipients have turned to predatory refund anticipation loans which are short-term loans typically carrying steep interest rates. Working families cannot afford to lose a significant portion of their EITC to these expensive short-term predatory loans. My bill will better protect consumers from predatory lenders that prey on the EITC benefits of low-income taxpayers, and I urge my colleagues to support it when the bill comes to the floor. In today's economy every penny counts, and the value of the earned income tax credit is magnified.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to better educate, protect,

and empower taxpayers. I urge my colleagues to join me to increase awareness of the earned-income tax credit.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

I yield the floor, and I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO CONGRESSIONAL STAFF

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, this is the second week of the 112th Congress. I welcome back the Presiding Officer. I have spent many a Monday afternoon presiding over this Chamber as a new Member in my first 2 years. While they are not here, I welcome my new colleagues in the Senate and, obviously, our new colleagues in the House.

We still have an enormous number of challenges facing us as a country, and I look forward to working with Members in both bodies to make sure we meet these challenges in a bipartisan way.

Last year, I took up the banner that had actually been started by the Presiding Officer's colleague who preceded him in this Chamber, and that was the effort of honoring, on a regular basis, exemplary Federal employees right here on the Senate floor. It is a tradition that was begun by Senator Ted Kaufman.

I want to start this new 112th Congress with what will be a weekly occurrence where I will come forward and recognize Federal employees who play an extraordinarily important role in our country. I have been blessed to have had a great number of those employees in the Commonwealth of Virginia, as the occupant of the Chair has been in Delaware.

Today, I thought I would actually rise on no specific employee but to honor congressional staff on Capitol Hill and in the many congressional districts across the country. There are nearly 6,000 Federal employees in the Senate, and nearly 10,000 serve in the House of Representatives. I am referring to the individuals who sort the mail, the clerks who sit before you in the presiding chair, the folks who manage the Chamber day in and day out, and the Capitol Police, who do an incredibly important job of making sure we are able to work in a safe environment. I am also referring to those folks who work directly for us as Members of Congress. They work their hearts out for us. Beatriz is here with me today. They work long hours and get little attention. Clearly, they impact the lives of millions of Americans every day.

I know a little about this firsthand because I started my career in politics as a staff member for then-Congress-

man Chris Dodd. I did manage to get him lost a number of times when I drove him around his district in eastern Connecticut. That experience taught me how dedicated the congressional staff is and that they are truly public servants and are instrumental to the democratic process that takes place on the floor of the Senate and on the floor of the House.

Congressional staff help Members of Congress draft and analyze legislation. They respond to literally thousands of letters, phone calls, and e-mails on a regular basis. More often than not, they are out in the district or back at home when we are in Washington.

I know my State staff has helped Virginians with securing adoptions, reuniting families through our immigration casework, and simply helping countless Virginia families navigate the complex bureaucracy that we know as the Federal Government.

Congressional staff also help us plan events that bring us closer to those we represent so we can continue to hear their views or complaints as we try to communicate our agenda.

I want to take a special moment—and we did this as a body last week—to pay tribute to those who were lost in the horrible shooting in Tucson. It is important to remember as we pray for the recovery of Congresswoman GIFFORDS that we recall as well a member of her staff, Gabe Zimmerman, who was Congresswoman GIFFORDS' director of community outreach. Gabe was one of the victims of that mass shooting. He was simply doing his job organizing "Congress On Your Corner" for the Congresswoman to make sure the folks who hired her, the people of Arizona, had a chance to see her firsthand and express their views.

I want to make sure we also recognize and continue to keep in our prayers Pamela Simon and Ronald Barber who were injured on that day and are in the process of making their recovery.

As we keep in mind that tragedy, I think it is important that we recall not only are those of us who are directly hired sometimes put in harm's way by this job, but there are literally thousands of particularly young people who work for us day in and day out without a lot of recognition who are public servants as well. As we saw with the tragedy a month or so ago in Tucson, they sometimes give the greatest devotion of service as well.

I hope my colleagues will join me over the coming week or two and say a special thanks to all of those who work long and hard for us on our staffs, including the pages who keep the order; the reporters who make sure, even when we are a little bit too long-winded, that they take down virtually every word; and those special folks on the dais who have been known at times to keep new Members awake during particularly long-winded speeches by Members.

I thank our congressional staff. We will be back on a regular basis to cele-

brate the very good work of Federal employees in various walks of life. I can't think of a better way to restart this tradition than this week honoring those great staff members who serve us in the Senate and in the House.

With that, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. (Mr. MANCHIN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we are in morning business; is that right?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

REMEMBERING SUZANNE WAUGHTEL-HOPPER

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the heroic life of Suzanne Waughtel-Hopper, a deputy sheriff of Clark County, OH, and a beloved mother, wife, daughter, sister, and friend who was killed in the line of duty on the morning of January 1, 2011.

On that fateful day, Deputy Hopper, who went 6 years without ever missing a work day, volunteered to work overtime where she was scheduled to start her shift at 3 a.m. But by 2:34 a.m. she had already started her patrol, and by 2:58 a.m. she had already made an arrest by taking a drunk driver off the street. Throughout the morning, she fielded calls of theft and criminal activity, and by 11:30 a.m. she answered her last call, a report of a dispute at a local campground. While taking forensic evidence photographs, she was shot and killed and German Township officer Jeremy Blum was injured. As Deputy Hopper did each day of her career, she answered her call to duty, the call to uphold the sacred oath she took to protect her community.

In the days since her tragic loss, family and friends have recounted her commitment to the core values of the Clark County Sheriff's Office—integrity, duty, courage, and honor. During the celebration of her life on January 7, 2011, at First Christian Church in Springfield, OH, thousands of people from Clark County and across the State and the Nation remembered her acts of courage on the job, her kindness and empathy to the community, and her love and affection for her family. Flag waving mourners gave thanks and prayers to a public servant who kept their streets and neighborhoods safe for the last 12 years.

School children will remember her as a role model and DARE instructor. Special Olympians will remember her encouragement and support, while several charities will remember her generosity and selflessness. Families who she helped in the line of duty will remember the clothing and food she provided them while she was off duty.