

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Kentucky is recognized.

EDA

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I was discussing with the majority leader privately the comments he made publicly about getting votes. I have talked to my Members, and I understand he indicated that most of our Members who have amendments are willing to take short time agreements. We ought to be able to move forward and have votes, and the Senate can function the way it should.

Mr. President, with each passing day, the American people grow more concerned about our Nation's future. The Washington Post-ABC news poll this week said that by a ratio of 2 to 1, Americans believe we are on the wrong track, and 9 out of 10 rate the economy negatively. Yesterday's CNN poll found that many Americans expect another Great Depression.

It is in this context that President Obama has started talking about how concerned he is about jobs. This week, the President said he wakes up every morning and asks himself what he can do to spur job creation. Every morning this week, I have come to the floor with some suggestions for him.

The fact is that many Americans have a hard time believing the President is focused on jobs when so many of his policies seem to be designed to destroy them. In some key areas, such as trade, energy, and debt, the President himself has acknowledged that a reversal of his policies would create jobs and spur recovery.

Let's start with trade. Hoping to sound as though he had a plan for job creation, the President used the giant platform provided by his annual State of the Union Message in January to declare that he had finalized a trade agreement with South Korea that would support at least 70,000 American jobs. Yet, nearly 5 months later, he sent his aides out to say that he won't sign them into law unless Congress approves billions more in government spending first.

On energy, the President has acknowledged the pressure that regulations put on job creators. That is why he ordered a review of them in January. Yet, by one estimate, the national energy tax his administration tried to pass through the EPA could cost, by some estimates, millions of jobs—millions. While the President has acknowledged that in order to sustain economic growth and create jobs, as he

put it last year, we would need to harness traditional sources of energy, his continued refusal to issue drilling permits in the gulf has had a devastating economic effect.

On the debt, the President himself has said, "If we don't have a serious plan to tackle the debt and the deficit, that could actually end up being a bigger drag on the economy than anything else." Yet, under his leadership, the Nation's national debt has skyrocketed 35 percent, from \$10.6 trillion to \$14.2 trillion, our deficit is three times bigger than the biggest annual deficit during the Bush administration, and the President refuses to put forward a serious plan to do anything to bring the debt or the deficit down.

So there is a pattern here. The President likes to say he is concerned about the economy and jobs, but his policies tell an entirely different story. He can talk all he wants, but he cannot walk away from what he has done, and the things he is failing to do right now to create private sector jobs and to get our economy moving again. Chief among them is his refusal to do anything to lower the debt and deficits he has done so much to create.

Right now, U.S. businesses are sitting on nearly \$2 trillion in cash. Most of them would love to invest this cash in new products, ventures, and employees. Yet they are holding back. Why? It is not just the regulations and the mixed signals they are getting about taxes or the expectation that all the spending today will necessarily lead to higher taxes tomorrow; it is also the uncertainty surrounding our future. How can businesses be confident about the future and hire new workers to build that future if the Democrats who run the White House aren't willing to do anything—anything at all—about our deficits and our debt?

Investment follows certainty. That is one thing this White House refuses to provide. This ongoing uncertainty is paralyzing our economic recovery and seriously hindering job creation.

One recent study suggests that any nation which carries a public debt load at or above 90 percent of its economy loses one point of economic growth, which the administration's own economists have said is equivalent to 1 million jobs. So why won't they propose a serious plan to lower it? When will the administration follow through on what it knows it has to do to spur job growth? The solutions are right in front of us.

The administration acknowledges that free trade agreements, expanding domestic energy exploration, cutting regulations, providing tax certainty, and reducing the debt will lead to a dramatic increase in jobs. So why won't it follow through?

Too often, unfortunately, the answer is political. They don't want to cross some special interest group—whether it is those who don't like trade agreements or those who don't like the way private companies such as Boeing run

their businesses or those who don't want to give up a single solitary penny of Federal spending.

But the good of the country is more important than the goals of some political interest group. We have to rein in our debt, cut spending, reduce taxes, reform entitlements, and grow this economy. This administration knows this as well as I do. It is time to act.

So, looking ahead, the key to success, in my view—and in the judgment of others, including Moody's—is for everyone involved to view the upcoming debt limit vote as an opportunity—an opportunity—to reduce Washington spending now and to save the taxpayers trillions of dollars over the long term. It is an opportunity to put our fiscal house in order and to prevent the fiscal crisis we all know is coming. We know what we need to do. The time to do it is now.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half.

The Senator from Iowa is recognized.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. GRASSLEY pertaining to the introduction of S. 1161 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Dakota.

THE BUDGET

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, last week I had the opportunity to travel my State of South Dakota, as I think most Senators did who were home over the break. During the week, I was able to be part of a couple of events in my State with former Comptroller General David Walker. I think most people here are acquainted with Mr. Walker. He had a 10-year run as the Comptroller General of this country. He has since started an organization called the Comeback America Initiative and has been traveling the country trying to explain to the public the issues surrounding our national debt—high Federal spending levels and their effect on our Nation's future.

I would add he is someone who takes both parties to task. He is an equal opportunity critic. He is very bipartisan in his criticism of the out-of-control

spending that exists in Washington, DC, but he did point out the tremendous growth in government which has occurred in the course of our Nation's history. In fact, when our country was founded, if we go back to the formative years of our country—and he uses the year 1800 as an example—government spending made up just 2 percent of our entire economy. Just 2 percent of our GDP represented government spending. Today, it makes up almost 25 percent, and we are on a trend line, a trajectory, where that will rise to 39 percent by the year 2040.

So we have seen this upward spike in the spending, the amount of Federal spending as a percentage of our entire economic output. The reason Mr. Walker gives for the continuing increase in spending is primarily entitlement programs. In other words, we have Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security which now represent about 43 percent in 2010. Those three programs represented 43 percent of our total Federal spending and, again, that number is set to spike as we head into the future.

Mr. Walker pointed out we are set to spend more on mandatory programs than we will take in in revenue in 2011. So this current year we will spend more on mandatory programs, which include those I just mentioned—Medicare, Social Security, and Medicaid—than all the revenue the Federal Government will take in. So that would mean we can't even afford to pay out for the mandatory spending programs we have in our budget, not to mention those discretionary programs which are the other part of our Federal budget.

If we look at it in terms of how much we spend today and how much we borrow, we are borrowing about 42 cents out of every dollar we spend. That is the reality we are faced with. So it is clear we need to make some reforms, Mr. President, particularly in the entitlement programs, to put them on a more sustainable footing.

Further, Mr. Walker shared the results of his fiscal fitness index, which puts the United States at 28 out of 34 developed countries—just behind Italy and just two places in front of Ireland. We are No. 28 out of 34 developed countries around the world in terms of our fiscal fitness.

Mr. Walker's message, obviously, is not a fun one. It is not a message you would expect people to like to hear. It is not a message that promises more spending on people's preferred programs. Yet my constituents were eager to hear this message. Why is that? No. 1, he was honest. He was honest about the size of our problem, about the scope of our unfunded liabilities, about the causes of this deficit—that it is primarily a spending-driven crisis, about the effect of the health care law on health care spending in this country, and about the measures that are needed to cut spending and to bring the budget back into balance.

My constituents appreciate that kind of honesty. They appreciate someone

telling them the truth, not simply continuing to make promises that cannot be kept. And, No. 2, they were eager to hear his message because his message offered hope. He pointed out that if the country adopted a fiscal plan that would bring down our deficits on a level that was similar to the plan of the President's fiscal commission, our Nation's rating on the fiscal fitness index would jump from 28th clear up to 8th place. He showed the attendees that there is a series of steps we can take to fix Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid—to preserve these important programs without bankrupting our country—and he showed us that if we start now we have time to make these changes without being forced to make Draconian cuts or to hike tax rates.

This hope that we can fix these problems is real and it gives the general public something they can understand. That was certainly the case with my constituents last week.

Unfortunately, there was another event that occurred last week and that was the release of the unemployment numbers. Those numbers did not reflect hope but, instead, indicated we have a long way to go toward fixing our economy. These numbers showed that unemployment had risen to 9.1 percent. Further, the long-term unemployed increased to 6.2 million people, as those who are out of work are taking longer to find jobs. This long-term unemployment is particularly important for a number of reasons. No. 1, these individuals who suffer from long-term unemployment often exhaust government and personal resources that are available to them. As a result, they are at greater risk of falling into poverty. Further, it indicates our economy is not sufficiently dynamic. These individuals could have skill mismatches or there may simply not be any jobs in their local economy.

Finally, the long-term unemployed may see their skills diminished and become less and less attached to the workforce. What this all means is it becomes harder and harder for these people to find a job as they no longer know the latest technologies or no longer have the skills they developed by years of practice. This creates longer term challenges for our economy to be able to find these individuals jobs.

The question is how do we create an environment where businesses and individuals can be creating jobs. We know we need to cut spending, to cut our deficit, and to cut unnecessary and harmful regulations. In a recent presentation to the University of Washington, Nobel laureate Robert Lucas pointed out that the possibility of higher taxes, the uncertainty of regulations, and the increasing role of the Federal Government in health care because of the health care law, are all contributors to our slow economic recovery.

Likewise, Dr. Lucas speculated that our economy may continue to grow at

a slower rate because of the increased regulation, taxation, and spending that is moving us closer to a European welfare state. In fact, Dr. Lucas notes that these European economies have incomes that are 20 to 30 percent less per capita because of these differences in the size of government.

It is clear it would even further increase unemployment if we continued to move along this path. We cannot continue with the status quo. We already know the size of our debt is costing us 1 percentage point in growth every year which, according to the White House's own economists, is the equivalent of 1 million jobs. In other words, when we sustain the kind of debt load we have today—our gross debt as a percentage of our GDP, our entire economic output, is over 90 percent—that means we are losing economic growth and that means we are shedding jobs as a consequence of this high level of debt and high level of spending.

We need to grow the private economy, shrink government spending, and cut our debts and deficits. This is the path that will help us on a recovery, help our economy to recover, and create the jobs that are necessary to lower that unemployment rate.

We know we can do this. There are a number of reforms and spending cuts we are pushing to attach to the deadline that is under discussion right now so we can make it easier and cheaper for individuals to create the jobs that are so necessary to get our economy back on track and get people back to work. There are a number of things that can be done and should be done.

Obviously, as I noted, as we continue the debate about spending and debt and doing something about this year-over-year \$1.4 trillion, \$1.5 trillion, now \$14.3 trillion debt that is hanging like a cloud over our economy, we have to deal with that. We have an opportunity, as has been noted by the leader earlier this morning, to do that in the context of this debt limit debate we are going to have. We should view this—both sides—as an opportunity to do something meaningful about spending and debt and to put our country on a more sustainable fiscal path for our future.

But there are a number of other things that impact the economy today that should be done. One is we have three pending trade agreements that were negotiated 3 to 4 years ago. They have been languishing here because the White House will not send those trade agreements up here for Congress to act.

To give an example of what that means to an agricultural State such as South Dakota, Colombia is one of those three trade agreements—Colombia, Panama, and South Korea, all of which present markets for South Dakota agricultural markets. But agricultural exports are a big part of our trade relationship with Colombia. In 2008 we had an 81-percent market share in Colombia. Today that is a 27-percent market

share. We need those trade agreements approved to create jobs and to grow this economy. I hope the White House will send those, follow through on their rhetoric and actually send those trade agreements up here so we can act on them.

It has been 771 days since we passed a budget in this country. We and the administration talk about doing something about spending and debt, and yet here we are having gone 771 days without even having passed a budget, the most fundamental responsibility we have to the taxpayers of this country. If we are serious about spending and debt, we need a budget that sets a blueprint for a more fiscally sustainable future for this country. We need energy policies that allow us to develop American energy to get fuel costs under control, which also impacts in a very direct way our economy and our ability to create jobs.

The solutions are out there, they are very straightforward and simple. We need to have the will to move forward and address these issues and I hope we will because the American people expect and deserve that we will. As Dr. Walker pointed out last week, in my State of South Dakota, if we do not, we are headed for a fiscal train wreck.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Utah is recognized.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I ask for enough time to give my remarks this morning and I ask for an equivalent amount of time for the other side.

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

Mr. HATCH. I hope I can stay within the time constraints, but I am not sure.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Utah is recognized.

Mr. HATCH. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. HATCH pertaining to the submission of S. Con. Res. 23 are located in today's RECORD under "Submission of Concurrent Senate Resolutions.")

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

TECHNICAL SERGEANT KRISTOFFER M. SOLESBEE

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to TSgt Kristoffer M. Solesbee of Hill Air Force Base's 75th Civil Engineer Squadron. Technical Sergeant Solesbee was killed in action near the city of Shorabak, Afghanistan.

Technical Sergeant Solesbee was a brave and courageous man. Not only did he volunteer to serve his country, returning to the field of battle three times, twice in Iraq and this final tour in Afghanistan, but he volunteered for one of the most dangerous assignments in the war on terrorism; he was an explosive ordnance disposal technician.

This is not the first time a member of Hill's EOD flight had been killed

while protecting his fellow servicemembers from improvised explosive devices. In early 2007, three other members of the 75th Civil Engineering Squadron were also killed. Yet, despite this tragedy, Technical Sergeant Solesbee always returned to duty. I believe one of Utah's largest newspapers, The Standard Examiner, paid him the highest tribute when it stated "Kristoffer M. Solesbee died doing what he loved: saving lives." I cannot think of a better definition of a true hero.

From those who knew him best, his family, friends and fellow servicemembers, described him as smart and highly energetic. Growing up he loved model rockets and radio controlled cars and airplanes. During his 11-year career in the service, his fellow airmen came to rely upon him and his professionalism. Indeed, there is broad consensus among Hill's EOD technicians that he was the benchmark by which others were judged.

His distinguished service also did not go unrecognized. Technical Sergeant Solesbee was the recipient of the Bronze Star Medal with Valor device and second oak leaf cluster, the Air Force Meritorious Service Medal, Purple Heart Medal, the Air Force Commendation Medal with one oak leaf cluster, Air Force Achievement Medal with one oak leaf cluster, and the Air Force Combat Action Medal.

I know God will be watching over the family of this admirable man. He gave his life so that others may live. TSgt Kristoffer M. Solesbee will never be forgotten.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. 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.

HONORING RAFAT R. ANSARI

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, once again, I come to the floor to celebrate and recognize the contribution of our Federal employees. I do this on a regular basis because while we debate the issues of the day and grapple with issues around the debt and deficit and the circumstances that will require us to cut back on government spending, I think it is important to remember the literally millions of Americans who work in one form or another for our Federal Government day-in and day-out. From our armed services, to folks who work within this Capitol Complex, to folks who work within Health and Human Services, to those who work in research, to those who make enormous contributions to our Nation, we should not lose sight of them as we grapple with the debt and deficit and a host of other issues we deal with in this body.

So today I rise to honor another great Federal employee, Rafat Ansari. Mr. Ansari is a senior scientist and leading innovator at NASA's Glenn Research Center in Cleveland. He has been recognized for developing a safe, noninvasive laser device that could drastically improve the early detection of cataracts and improve people's lives in the process.

Cataracts are the leading cause of vision loss and blindness in the United States and in the world. They affect over 22 million Americans over the age of 40, and over \$6.8 billion is spent annually in the United States on cataract treatment.

Mr. Ansari was motivated to help cataract patients after his father was diagnosed with the disease. He began researching the disease and realized that cataracts are caused by proteins in the lens that cluster abnormally, a process similar to what he was studying in his space experiments.

Lacking the necessary financial resources, he began conducting research in his home kitchen using a light-scattering device which was able to identify clustered proteins in the eye lens. These kitchen experiments ultimately led to Mr. Ansari's invention of an innovative eye-scanning device and procedure that is at least two or three times stronger than any device on the market.

His invention also has the potential to significantly improve the ability to detect early signs of Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, diabetes, and many other diseases. The procedure is currently used by NASA to study the long-term consequences of space travel on the vision of astronauts.

Mr. Ansari's personal story is a testament to all that continues to make our Nation great. Born in Pakistan, Mr. Ansari always dreamed of working for NASA. Not only was he able to realize his dream of working for our government, working for NASA, but in the process he has made discoveries that could have a big impact on the lives of millions of people not only here in the United States but around the world.

I hope my colleagues will join me in honoring Mr. Ansari and those other great scientists and engineers at NASA for their excellence and service to our Nation.

So, again, I wish to acknowledge not only Mr. Ansari but all of our Federal workers. I think it is important. As somebody who has been very involved—and hopeful to do more—on this issue of debt and deficit, I know we will have to make substantial cutbacks in how government spends and operates. But I think we need to remember, as we talk about some of these cuts, that we are affecting the lives of literally millions of good Americans who try to keep the functions of this government working on an efficient, honest, and ethical basis day-in and day-out.

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

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