

This starts with making changes to unfunded mandates by the Environmental Protection Agency. Unnecessary and burdensome regulations imposed on our businesses cost money and cost jobs. EPA has put a target on America's industrial, manufacturing, and agricultural job creators. Clean air, clean water, and conservation are all very important, but the heavy-handed regulations coming from this EPA have little or nothing to do with clean air or clean water. We are witnessing a Federal bureaucratic power grab on behalf of a radical, job-destroying agenda. These regulations are making food more expensive, energy more expensive, and gasoline more expensive, and they are driving jobs out of our country. Our competitors are taking our jobs and emitting far more pollution into our atmosphere and oceans than we would here in the United States. Again, it is all pain and no gain. As the administration works to drive up the cost of energy, they seem to forget that a prosperous country is a country that can invest in conservation and protect the environment.

The President still wants to blame his predecessor for our sluggish economy and lack of jobs. The blame game won't help the President politically, and it won't help turn our economy around. It is true that President Obama inherited a weak economy, but he made it worse. Before President Obama took office, the Federal Government was carrying out many policies that distorted the market and contributed to the meltdown. In 2008, we were spending too much money and running severe deficits. Now our deficit is three times as big. Sadly, President Obama has made each of our economic problems worse.

I believe it is important to provide American businesses with an equal opportunity to compete and succeed while opening new markets for American products. I strongly believe that when presented with a level playing field, American businesses and workers can outperform any in the world in terms of quality and value.

With three pending trade agreements on the table waiting for approval, we are wasting precious time and resources at our disposal to open foreign markets to U.S. products. The lack of action on the Colombia, Panama, and South Korea agreements is concerning. I believe we need to move forward as quickly as possible to ratify these policies. American companies and their workers are losing market share and are being denied valuable business opportunities. That is why one of the first pieces of legislation I cosponsored as a Member of the Senate was S. Res. 20, legislation that urges this Chamber to consider and approve the pending free-trade agreements with these countries.

On multiple occasions, President Obama expressed support for the implementation of all of these trade agreements in order to reduce our Nation's

deficit and create American jobs for American workers. So far, there is still a failure to act on any of these agreements.

Americans deserve legislation that will promote job growth, but one of President Obama's legislative cornerstones, health care reform, actually costs jobs. We were told ObamaCare would create 4 million jobs, but reality tells a different story.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, there will be 750,000 fewer jobs. This legislation is bad for business. That is why we voted to eliminate the onerous 1099 reporting requirements included in this flawed legislation.

I will continue to fight for a full repeal of this law as we seek meaningful health care reform that provides quality, affordable access for all citizens based on free market principles.

The simple truth is there are 14 million Americans out of work and millions more who have been forced into retirement or gave up looking for a job. These 14 million Americans are calling for our help, yet the majority and the administration continue to ignore their pleas.

We have a plan that is ready to move, and the practical free market ideas it is based upon will put Americans back to work. Let's show Linda in Mountain Home and the millions of Americans looking for a job that we are working to change the direction our country is headed and be a job creator.

Mr. President, I 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. SESSIONS. I ask that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

THE ECONOMY

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I had the opportunity this morning to catch the CNBC program that had Jack Welch, former CEO of GE on, and I thought he made a number of valuable points. He is very worried about our economy. He believes we are facing serious troubles, and we need to take action to do something about it. As a corporate leader of great renown, one of the more respected corporate leaders in America at this time, he evidenced a real frustration at the lack of leadership this administration is showing with regard to our financial crisis.

He said a number of things. One of them was classic leadership, classic thought by a manager, a man who has managed a very large corporation worldwide with many moving parts. He said we have to have a strategy, and we have no strategy. I think that is correct. I do not believe the American people sense that this country is able to articulate a serious strategy to con-

front the difficulties with which we are now dealing.

He said everything needs to go through a screen, and in his opinion the screen should be what our strategy is and our strategy should be, in general, to create an economy that is productive, innovative, and growing; creating jobs, creating wealth, creating prosperity, and everything ought to be judged by that.

One of the points he mentioned was drilling for oil and gas in America. We have all kinds of government agencies here, all kinds of regulations and a permitorium, a blocking of the giving of permits, that has substantially reduced the ability of this Nation to produce oil and gas at home, a critical factor if we are going to be competitive and economically prosperous.

We need to quit buying so much abroad, sending wealth abroad, and keep it at home. He just threw that out as one of the things that would never get through a screen. Instead of helping this country to be more prosperous and create jobs and growth, it does just the opposite. Yet in this massive government, we take contradictory actions, and as a result we are muddling along at a very unhealthy rate, and the American people are worried about it.

Last week was the sixth consecutive week that the stock market fell. We were told in January, when things were progressing, that everything was just doing great and that we are creating a lot of jobs; we are creating jobs, and the market is doing better. But in fact it is not moving very well. If we read the financial pages, we see that the people who spend their lives dealing with the economic threats we face are uneasy about our future.

Just read those articles in Barron's that just came out over the weekend about the roundtable of worldwide economic experts. It was very troubling to me. Many of them had serious concerns about the future. Would we have a doubledip? Some seem to say yes. The Presiding Officer, Mr. COONS, is on the Budget Committee and knows the numbers we are dealing with and has heard the testimony that Mr. Bowles, former Chief of Staff for President Clinton, and Alan Simpson, in their Fiscal Commission Report, said we are facing the most predictable crisis in our history, and it could cause economic difficulties for us soon. Mr. Bowles said 2 years, give or take. Not just for our grandchildren, but soon.

This is why the experts say we have a problem. I do not believe we have from the White House any call to the kind of action necessary to alter the unsustainable debt trajectory we are on.

I do not think the American people fully understand, but they understood enough to punish the Congress in this last election. I am afraid they are going to punish us again because no Congress can defend itself from the criticism that we have presided over a government that is borrowing 40 cents

of every dollar and spending \$3.7 billion and taking in only \$2.2 billion and borrowing the rest. We are on a path that does not alter that. The President's budget is the most irresponsible ever submitted and would make our debt path worse rather than better, so I am worried about it. So the majority leader announces: Well, it would be foolish to have a budget. Senator REID said it would be foolish to have a budget, at a time when we have never faced a greater threat to the integrity of our economic system than we face today.

Let me repeat that. We have never been in a position in which the economy could do as much harm to our Nation as it can today. We are heading to the wall at warp speed. It is a dangerous circumstance. But we can get off this path. We have to do some things that are not very pleasant, but not impossible, that are being done by mayors and county commissioners and Governors all over America and in countries around the world. The British made some very substantial cuts to their overall spending program, far more than we are discussing, and some people pushed back and said, We are cutting too much. That debate will happen here, if we cut spending here.

The International Monetary Fund, certainly no bastion of conservative economic thought, said, No, U.K., stay the course. Don't weaken now. You set a good, tough path for constraining and reducing spending, and if you stay the course you will be more successful than if you give up and quit under the pressure that you might be under today.

So how do we get there? How do we get to the point where we deal with these issues? Harvard economist Alberto Alesina, drawing from his and others' research on large fiscal adjustments across multiple nations, said this:

Spending cuts are far more effective than tax increases in stabilizing the debt and avoiding economic downturns. In fact, in several episodes, spending cuts adopted to reduce deficits have been associated with government expansions rather than recessions.

Goldman Sachs has also done a study that indicates that. We have empirical evidence that countries that have taken firm steps to get their financial house in order have found that, maybe almost to their surprise, they have had economic growth quicker than many had projected.

So where are we today? Apparently, we are not going to have any kind of regular budget process in the Senate, to my great disappointment. I believe Senator CONRAD, the chairman of the Budget Committee—I am the ranking Republican on that committee—was prepared to have a markup, but the Democratic leadership has decided not to. Senators can't call a Budget Committee markup; only the chairman and the leaders can do those kinds of things. They have decided not to. Under the Congressional Budget Act, the Budget Committee should have marked up and passed a budget resolu-

tion by April 1 of this year, and Congress should have passed it by April 15. We are now getting close to July 4 and we have had no real public discussion, no national debate, about the challenges this Nation faces.

First we had the Gang of Six. They have been meeting in secret, and I don't know who advised them. I don't think average Americans, in their struggles—maybe they have lost their job or haven't seen their pay increase or have seen their overtime eliminated—were in the room with them. They are good people. I was kind of getting anxious for a month or so to hear something from them. Maybe it would be a good deal. Maybe it would be something to get us moving. I don't know. I had my doubts about it, and I expressed that, but I expressed my support to see what they could produce. Maybe it would be worthwhile. I am withholding judgment. So now we are not hearing from them, although they apparently have enough work product—maybe even a plan—that they met with 10 other Senators, I understand, to discuss what they are planning on. They haven't let anybody else in on the deal.

But now we hear, Don't worry about the Gang of Six. If that doesn't work, we have the Vice President. President Obama has asked him to have meetings with a very small group of Senate and House leaders, and they are going to write us a budget. There are some good people meeting in that group. I don't have any doubt about that. But weeks have gone by. We had a week recess and apparently it was over 2 weeks that they didn't even meet.

The President is traveling around the world making speeches, raising money, and this country has not had a budget in 775 days. This Senate has not passed a budget in 775 days. The Budget Act requires us to pass a budget. It can't be filibustered. It can be passed with a simple majority. If it is going to be a partisan effort—and sometimes it is a purely partisan vote—53 Democratic Senators here ought to be able to pass a budget. We passed a budget when Republicans had a one-vote majority. Sometimes you can get a bipartisan agreement on a budget. That is the best thing. Sometimes it is done with a simple majority. So we have the potential to do that.

But, oh, no. Weeks have gone by and we are waiting on these meetings at the White House. Nobody knows exactly what is happening there. It is supposed to be secret. Normally a budget is brought up, it is brought before the Budget Committee, the chairman lays down the chairman's mark, everybody gets to offer complete substitutes, gets to offer their whole budget or technical amendments or significant amendments to that budget, and they get voted on, and the matter is discussed. The American people can get a copy of the chairman's mark and the amendments offered by the other members of the committee. That is how we

do business in a democracy, the last I heard, and then we are accountable, right? By how much do you think we ought to raise taxes on the American people? By how much do you think we are going to cut spending? Are you going to dare to make any changes in Medicare? I will not vote for it if you make any change in Medicare. Or: You have to do something about these entitlements. You didn't do anything about the Medicare entitlements? You are going to let them go broke? Those are the kinds of good discussions we would be having, and the American people could see it. Then it comes to the floor of the Senate. It has an expedited process, but there is a real opportunity to have amendments—even hundreds of amendments—to offer to the Budget Act, and we then have something that at least is seen by the American people and at least they will know if their representatives voted for or against it. But I think this idea of doing it in some other order, not the regular order, is an unhealthy process, and I hope we can do better.

I wish to conclude by saying that in 775 days, I don't believe we have fulfilled our responsibility. We obviously have not fulfilled our statutory responsibility under the Budget Act, which says we should have a budget by April 15. It also says we should have held a markup by April 1. Well, it is tough business, standing before the American people in this crisis we are in, and proposing the kinds of severe actions that are going to be necessary to put our country on the right path—not the path to decline, not the path to debt crisis, but the path to prosperity. It is going to take some effort. It is going to be painful in some ways. But we are not moving in that direction at all.

What about the House of Representatives? They passed a budget. They passed a bold budget—a budget that goes 10 years and then even further, and it laid out a historic plan. It confronted the growth in entitlement programs that is a threat to their very viability. It encouraged economic growth. It reduced spending, which has surged in the last several years. Indeed, in the last two cycles, we have increased nondefense discretionary spending 25 percent. People act as though if we cut spending, we are going to sink in the ocean. That growth could be eliminated and we would be no worse off than we were 3 years ago.

So the House did their duty. And what happened? Our Democratic leader over here in the Senate, instead of producing his own budget, calls up the House budget and he wants to talk about how horrible it is and then vote on it. It got quite a number of votes in the Senate—certainly not enough to pass. We got a lot of votes. So I offered the President's budget, the one he submitted a couple months ago and that I call the most irresponsible budget ever to be presented to this Nation—and I

stand by that. We are in a systemic crisis that has to be confronted with serious decision making, and the President's budget comes nowhere close to doing that. So I offered it. The President's budget failed 97 to 0. Not one Member of this Senate, Republican or Democrat, voted for that budget.

I think this is irresponsible. We have seen 775 days pass. We didn't have a budget last year. We didn't pass a single appropriations bill last year. Everything was cobbled together in this monumental CR we heard about, the continuing resolution. It is a totally ineffective method of governing this country and spending money. Congress ought to do its 12 appropriations bills properly every year. First, they should have a budget that tells all the committees how much money they have to spend and then they should pass the 12 appropriations bills. Each one should be brought up subject to amendment and voted on.

We have been in this irresponsible circumstance. My request is to our colleagues who are working either in the White House with the Vice President or whatever they are doing over there, the Gang of Six or Five or whatever—whatever they are doing—how about getting busy. How about let's see some numbers so we can get to work. I don't think it is going to be well received by Members of the Senate to have plopped down in our lap, on the eve of some important matter such as the debt ceiling, a budget proposal that nobody has had a chance to study and that the American people don't know the details of. I thought that was one of the things we learned in the last election. I thought we learned the American people want transparency. They want accountability. They want to know what their representatives are doing, and they want to see them working in the light of day, not the dark of night. I think that is reasonable. That is the way our Congress was set up to work. That is what I wish to see.

I think it is time for these meetings to start wrapping up. I think it is time for us to start seeing some numbers. What are they going to do, wait for the last possible day to raise the debt ceiling and then waltz in here with some sort of agreement we are all supposed to rubberstamp in a state of panic? I don't appreciate that. I don't think the American people will either. It is not good government. If they have a plan, let's start seeing what it is. Let's bring it up and let's start having a public discussion on it and vote on it. I think that is the right way to go about our business.

I am very concerned that we have gotten away from the regular order. I believe we have gotten away from our august responsibility to pass a budget, to decide openly and publicly how much we think we can spend, how much we are going to tax, how much debt we are going to have. We ought to do that publicly and openly. I believe that will be held before the public and

it will help the American people understand how deep a hole we are in. It is far deeper than most of us realize. I have looked at the numbers. They are very grim indeed. We need to get started sooner rather than later.

I thank the Chair.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

ETHANOL

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I am pleased to join with Senators COBURN and FEINSTEIN in offering an amendment to repeal the ethanol excise tax credit and the ethanol import tariff. These policies are fiscally irresponsible, environmentally unwise, and economically indefensible.

Historically, our government has helped a product compete in one of three ways: either we subsidize it, we protect it from competition, or we require its use. Right now, ethanol may be the only product receiving all three forms of support.

The ethanol tax break is extraordinarily expensive. The Government Accountability Office has found that the tax credit costs American taxpayers a staggering \$6 billion annually. This is quite a sum to prop up a fuel that is causing land conversion for corn production, commodity and food prices to rise, and is barely putting a dent in our Nation's dependence on foreign oil.

With our amendment, which has an effective date of July 1, we have the opportunity to immediately save American taxpayers nearly \$3 billion in just the 6 months remaining in this year.

The 2007 Energy Independence and Security Act requires the production of at least 36 billion gallons of biofuels in 2022, up from the original 2005 Energy Policy Act, which required 7.5 billion gallons by 2012. Collectively, the first generation biofuels industry will receive tens of billions in unnecessary subsidies through the year 2022.

If the current subsidy were allowed to continue for 5 years, the Federal Treasury would pay oil companies at least \$31 billion to use 69 billion gallons of corn-based ethanol that the Federal Renewable Fuels Standard already requires them to use. We simply cannot afford to pay the oil industry for following the law.

The data overwhelmingly demonstrates that the costs of the current ethanol subsidies and tariffs far outweigh their benefits. The Center for Agricultural and Rural Development at Iowa State University estimated that a 1-year extension of the ethanol subsidy and tariff would lead to only 427 addi-

tional direct domestic jobs at a cost of almost \$6 billion. That is roughly \$14 million of taxpayer money per job.

While expanding our capacity to generate alternative domestic fuel sources is an important step toward becoming less dependent on foreign oil, I have serious concerns about the effects of increased ethanol use. There are other alternative sources of energy that make far more sense.

The energy, agricultural, and automotive sectors are already struggling to adapt to the existing ethanol mandates. I am disappointed the Environmental Protection Agency has issued a partial waiver for the use of E-15, a blend of gasoline containing 15 percent ethanol. Many residents in my State have already experienced difficulties using gasoline blended with 10 percent ethanol, finding that it causes problems in older cars, snowmobiles, boats, lawn mowers, and off-the-road vehicles. The EPA's E-15 waiver fails to adequately protect against misfueling and will add unnecessary confusion at the gas pump for consumers. We simply cannot place so many engines in jeopardy.

These first-generation biofuel mandates also present environmental concerns, as they could result in energy efficiency losses and increased emissions of air pollutants because the mechanical failures can jeopardize the effectiveness of mission control devices and systems installed on engines.

In addition, over recent years, we have seen food and feed prices increase as crops have been diverted to first-generation biofuel production. I think of it this way: We should be raising crops for food, not for fuel.

Senate Homeland Security Committee chairman JOE LIEBERMAN and I held a series of hearings in 2008 that examined the impact of corn-based ethanol on food prices, and we found that it certainly had a negative impact. For one thing, crops that had been grown to support other grains were being converted to produce corn. The land was being switched to corn production, and the corn was no longer available for the products that used corn for food, but instead was being diverted to the production of ethanol.

The bottom line is that we can no longer ignore the cost of this policy to our Nation and its taxpayers, particularly given our current fiscal crisis. At a time when we are projecting a deficit, this year alone, of \$1.5 trillion, why in the world are we spending \$6 billion subsidizing ethanol? Subsidizing the blending of corn-based ethanol into gasoline is simply fiscally indefensible.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the Coburn-Feinstein amendment to repeal the ethanol excise tax credit and to eliminate the ethanol import tariff.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.