

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.

MEDICAID

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, in 1964 President Johnson envisioned an America that “rests on abundance and liberty for all.” It was against LBJ’s backdrop of the Great Society that we reignited a tradition of community. This was a little spillover of the 1960s and our flight to the Moon and all of that, but the Nation somehow came together, and we sensed that we were a community and that we had a mutual obligation to each other, and that is at the very least characteristic of the American people, more then than now. Programs such as VISTA, Peace Corps, Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid were born in those few years, 1961 through 1964.

Sadly, nearly 50 years after LBJ’s war on poverty, we have witnessed vicious attempts to roll back government programs designed to give low-income Americans a hand up in life. I do not mean just low-income Americans but disabled Americans, very poor senior Americans who qualify for both Medicare and Medicaid—such a difficult journey they have. What we want to do is not to give people a hand up but simply to be a safety net. That is what he said this country owed its people. That is true about defense, and that is true about social policy. We have responsibility, all of us, to do that, to make sure nobody is left out.

There is no question that we must reduce our deficit, and I have a whole series of ways that can be done in abundance, but we should not do so on the backs of working families still struggling under the weight of this recession. Oh, yes, we are in a recession, so everything that was true about people who were having a hard time before is a lot truer now. Yet bill after bill proposed by Republicans seeks to do exactly that.

The House Republican H.R. 1 was a direct attack on America’s working families and the successful education, job-training, and community development programs designed to combat poverty.

The Republican budget proposal for next year goes even further. It attacks Medicare and Medicaid, the health programs on which over 100 million American people rely—some more than others, but all have to have that as a safety net.

At a critical moment in our economic recovery, Republicans are more focused on settling old scores—evidently from health care reform and the bitterness of that fight—than they are on creating jobs or protecting people. The Republican plan for getting our deficit under control amounts to an upside-down government. Instead of helping those who depend on government programs to support their families, the Republican plan would guarantee that millionaires, billionaires, and large corporations continue to receive trillions of dollars—to wit, \$4 trillion under the new budget—in government subsidies, subsidies that will grow ex-

ponentially over time and substantially increase their benefit. They will do very, very well indeed were we to make the tragic mistake of accepting that.

Republicans are not for a fair or balanced approach to deficit reduction, and it is a great mystery to me. It is a quandary to me. I mean, you can say it is theological or whatever, you can make up all kinds of nasty political views of it, but nevertheless that is what it is. What they are there for is a government that only exists to support big business and wealthy Americans—kind of a perpetual TARP for their friends.

Well, I reject that notion, and the American people do too. In my estimation, there is no government program that more fully embodies our Nation’s tradition of community than Medicaid, our sense of mutual obligation. Some people are born wealthy. Some people are born very poor. Some people are born in between. Some people are born wealthy and then become poor. Some people are born poor and then become wealthy. But while they are down, they have a safety net, and it is called Medicaid. You don’t hear people talking about it very much, particularly, frankly—somewhat disappointedly—from my side of the aisle.

After almost 50 years, Medicaid is still a lifesaving part of what we do as a government, what we are meant to do as a government. Medicaid is simply too important to millions of people.

Nationally, there were 68 million people enrolled in Medicaid in 2010—68 million children, seniors, people with disabilities, pregnant women. These are families who are living on the edge and barely making it. They now have a safety net, more efficient than any private insurance program in existence. They have that.

In West Virginia, there were over 402,000 people enrolled in 2008, 152,000 of those aged and disabled and 191,000 children—children. So almost 50 years later, Medicaid is still a lifesaving part of our Nation’s health care system. In West Virginia, Medicaid covers 50 percent of all births. That tells you something.

In our country, 40 percent of all births are taken care of by Medicaid. That says a lot.

Sixty-two percent of long-term care is Medicaid and, along with the Children’s Health Insurance Program it covers 34 percent of the children in our country. There are a lot of people who fought very hard over a number of years to get the Children’s Health Insurance Program that would insure more children who were not at that point eligible. Well, they are still getting it, but the House wants to get rid of that program altogether. That is 34 percent of the children in our country.

Medicaid provides an essential lifeline to families during difficult economic times, when people lose jobs that have provided them health insurance.

Medicaid is the health care program that helps States during crises—not just people but States—including, obviously, the September 11 attacks, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the recent floods and tornadoes in the South and the Midwest—all being helped by Medicaid.

Medicaid is part of the fabric of our great Nation, and to be clear at this point, I need to say that the House bill that was passed by the House—and who voted for it and who did not obviously is very much on record—would devastate Medicaid and government in general out of discretionary spending.

Anyway, people who are covered by Medicaid do matter. They are people. They are families. They have their needs, their wants, their ambitions, their dreams, their sadnesses, their depressions, whatever.

Darren Hale, from Princeton, WV, wrote me.

I am a disabled West Virginian whose family relies on Medicare and Medicaid.

That may be a dual-eligible—you know, poor enough to be on Medicaid, old enough to be on Medicare, not able to survive simply on just one or the other.

I hope and pray that these health programs won’t be ended or totally changed. Please do not support Republican changes to these programs as a way of cutting costs to the taxpayer. The poor of West Virginia and elsewhere should not and cannot bear the burden of the deficit reduction that Republicans want.

We need to think very seriously about our priorities. That is what this conversation really leads me to.

Let’s say I am a 10-year-old boy, and I am being brought up in West Virginia. My means are meager. I step out into a road, and I am hit by a car. I don’t die, but perhaps my spine is fractured—probably—legs broken, and I am condemned to a life in a wheelchair.

Now, that child is not protected by the private enterprise system. That child, unless they are an unusual child from a fairly wealthy family who then can provide insurance—but they will spend themselves down, with that insurance being so incredibly important, and they will eventually qualify for Medicaid.

You know, when you are hit by a car, that is not something you plan on. It is not something you failed to do because you did not have a work ethic or whatever the common wisdom would be about that. It is just something that happened. But the fact remains that your health care is cut, your life is changed, and it grows more miserable because you have nothing in the way of a safety net if the Republican budget is passed, if we get too aggressive about cutting Medicaid.

I am troubled. Members of Congress and senior advocates have rightfully rallied in staunch defense of Medicare. You can find wonderful groups here in Washington who rise up in anger when people talk about cutting Medicare. They are for Medicare. They know