

American way. Workers deserve a fair shake and a fair election. If people want to form a union, they deserve that right to do so.

The steps they took are common sense. It removes unnecessary delays, cuts down on frivolous legal challenges, gives workers the right to a fair up-or-down vote, in a reasonable period of time. These new rules do not encourage unionization, and they do not discourage it. They just give workers the ability to say yes or no. Again, what they seek is valid.

The current system is broken. If a party takes advantage of every opportunity for delay, the average time before workers can vote is 198 days, and, as I have said, it has taken 13 years before people were allowed to vote in a union election. A study by the Center for Economic Policy Research found, among workers who openly advocate for a union during an election campaign, one in five is fired. Madam President, 9 out of 10 employers require their employees to attend meetings on work time to hear anti-union presentations. Workers are required to attend 10 anti-union meetings. Well, it is time to right this imbalance.

That is what the NLRB did—not tilt it one way or another but to give workers a fair right to have an election. The rules apply to secret ballot elections, but make modest changes to not to have it dragged out for years and years with frivolous lawsuits while preserving employer's due process rights. The new rules standardize time lines for union elections so that both sides have a fair chance to make their case and then employees have the right to a timely vote. They ensure that employers and employees have a level playing field, where corporate executives and rank-and-file workers alike have an equal chance to make their case for or against the union. That is all it is. It is nothing more, nothing less than that. This is a fair set of rules.

I am sure we are going to hear from the business community about this, saying this is meddling and this is going to tilt toward the unions. No, it doesn't. For far too long it has been tilted on the side of the employer and against the unions. Now we bring it back to the middle, where we say we are neither pro nor against, but we are going to let workers have the right to say whether they want to form a union. Some workplaces will choose a union, some will not. But protecting the right of workers to make that choice brings some balance and fairness to the system, so the deck isn't always stacked in favor of the wealthy and the powerful.

America's future depends on the middle class having not just bread, but roses too, just as was the case 99 years ago. Our government faces a clear choice: do we stand for seemingly endless corporate power, or do we stand for the basic rights of working people? Republicans keep pushing for special favors for the wealthy and big corpora-

tions, claiming this will create jobs and economic prosperity. Instead, over the last decade, it has brought us high unemployment and the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. The problem with trick down economics is that it failed to trickle down. Wealth has been increasingly concentrated at the top.

There is a better way. Quality jobs that pay a living wage, provide health insurance and a secure retirement are the foundation of a strong middle class. Having a strong middle class that can afford to buy quality products made in America is the recipe for our economic renewal.

I compliment the NLRB. I know I have heard there will be some challenges to it on the floor of the Senate. I hope reason will prevail and the Senate will once again stand for the inherent right of people to be able to organize and bargain collectively for their wages, hours, and conditions of employment.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

#### EDA

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, there was a vote yesterday on the Senate floor about a bill that was pending. It goes directly to the topic just raised by the Senator from Iowa. It was the Economic Development Revitalization Act. The EDA is an agency created almost a half century ago to create incentives for businesses to build, expand, and locate in places across America where there is high unemployment. It has been a success in Illinois and almost every other State.

For every \$1 the Federal Government puts on the table, it generates \$7 in economic activity. There is not a lot to go around, so they pick those projects that are the most promising, and it is a good agency. It is an agency that has enjoyed wide bipartisan support. Yet, when it came time yesterday to vote on whether we go ahead and pass the bill to reauthorize the agency, unfortunately, we could not find 60 Senators on the floor to vote yes. So the bill languishes and basically was pulled from the calendar.

It is the second time this year, when we face this recession and high unemployment, the Senate has refused to take up a bill that literally will help businesses create jobs across America. It does not make sense, does it, that when we have so many people out of work, we cannot even agree on a bill to create jobs and help business. It does not make sense, unless the premise of this debate is understood.

The Republican minority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, said his highest legislative priority this session was to make sure President Obama is a one-term President. It is that guiding force that led to the vote yesterday. It is that guiding force that has stopped us from passing meaningful legislation

when it comes to unemployment in America, time and again. You see, if we are destined and determined to stop this President and frustrate any efforts to build jobs, then the Senate will continue to languish.

How does this work? It works because when bills come to the floor, brought by the majority leader, HARRY REID, Senators from the other side of the aisle start a steady stream procession to this desk to file amendment after amendment, until we had literally 100 amendments filed to the Economic Development Administration bill. You say: Well, maybe this bill needed some work.

The amendments had little or nothing to do with the bill. They are about everything under the Sun—every issue a Senator can dream up or that his or her staff thinks might be interesting. Believe me, 100 is a modest number. We could certainly, our staff people and others, come up with hundreds more. But at the end of the day we still would not pass the Economic Development Revitalization Act. We would not help businesses locate, expand, and create jobs, and we will still continue to languish with millions of Americans unemployed.

I think it is time for us to face reality. The reality we face is that America has two deficits. The one we talk about a lot is the budget deficit, and it is serious. I was on the deficit commission, the Bowles-Simpson Commission. We looked at it long and hard and realized it is unsustainable for America to borrow 40 cents for every dollar it spends in Washington. We can't continue to do this. The debt of our Nation is growing dramatically, and we have to bring it to a stop. That means cutting spending and raising revenue. Those are the only two ways to reduce the deficit, and we have to do both. That is what the Bowles-Simpson Commission said—and I voted for it—a bipartisan vote for the Commission to move forward on the deficit. But they said something else: Don't do this too quickly; don't do it precipitously; be careful that we don't kill off the recovery we are engaged in.

The Bowles-Simpson Commission basically said to wait a year. Make a plan, make a commitment, but say for this year we are going to get America back to work. The Bowles-Simpson Commission knew—and we all know—we can't balance America's budget with 14 million people out of work. These are folks who should be earning a paycheck and paying taxes but instead are home looking for work, searching the Internet, searching the classifieds, and drawing benefits from the government instead of paying taxes. So as long as 14 million Americans are in that position, then, sadly, we are going to have a deficit that is aggravated rather than one that is cured.

So the Bowles-Simpson Commission said don't move too quickly to kill programs that make a difference. They are

right. I happen to think they were right in many other respects.

When we deal with our budget deficit, let's be honest about it. It is going to take sacrifice from everybody. Maybe some of the poorest among us cannot sacrifice any more. I understand that. But for most of us a little change in our lifestyle, a little change in the government benefits we might be receiving or the taxes we might be paying is not too high a price or too much to ask to put this economy on the right track.

I think a lot about sacrifices being made by Americans, and the first people who come to mind are our men and women in uniform who are serving around the world. I think about the sacrifice they have volunteered to make every single day. They are willing to risk and, in many cases, give their lives for this Nation. If they are willing to make that kind of sacrifice, can we honestly say with a straight face we can make no sacrifice to make America stronger? I think we can. I think we should. I think we ought to come together in a bipartisan fashion.

I am frustrated by the fact that for the last 5 months I have been meeting with a bipartisan group of Senators and we have come up with the basic outline of an approach which would dramatically reduce America's deficit in a balanced and fair way. It would put everything on the table. Let me underline the word "everything." Many of my colleagues don't want everything on the table. On this side of the aisle they don't want to talk about our entitlement programs. On the other side of the aisle they don't want to talk about revenue. I understand that, but we both have to give a little for the good of this country. But after 5 months of long, tortured negotiation; after what I consider to be a successful effort—95 percent successful—in producing a plan for deficit reduction, I am sorry to report we are just not ready to let the world in on what we have been doing. I wish we would.

I am prepared, and I hope other colleagues will be too, to come to the floor and to lay this out and say: If this helps—if this helps our country, if this helps Congress, if it helps the President, if it helps those who are working with Vice President BIDEN—then here is our offering. Here is our best effort. It is not perfect, and it won't be the end product. But for goodness' sakes, the time is over for talking behind closed doors. I appeal to all of my colleagues who believe we should come forward with this Gang of 6—now down to Gang of 5—proposal, to let it be known: Come to the floor, talk to our colleagues, let us break this logjam which has stopped us from bringing these ideas forward.

I want to keep my good faith with those who are engaged in this effort. I am not going to stand here and describe in any detail what we have been doing. I will, however, tell my colleagues I have reached a level of frustration. After all this work and all this

time, all this effort and all the political courage I have seen exhibited behind closed doors, we need to step forward and say something publicly. We need to do it in a fashion that gives some guidance to those who are making critical decisions.

Let's not reach the point where we literally test the creditworthiness of the United States of America by refusing to extend the debt ceiling. That is a bill which goes largely unnoticed each year. It is when America renews its mortgage. It comes due August 2 this year. If we don't do it, I can tell my colleagues what is going to happen. My projections are not based on any great expertise I have but on what has been told to me by the Chairman of the Federal Reserve, by the Secretary of the Treasury, by the President.

Here is what will happen: If the United States does not show we are ready to pay our debts in a timely fashion, what is going to happen automatically is that interest rates will rise. The Federal Reserve is supposed to report this week that they are going to keep interest rates low because they want America's economy to recover. We can spoil this party in a hurry if we get engaged in a political cat fight between the House and the Senate and both political parties and do not extend the debt ceiling. Failure to extend the debt ceiling or creating uncertainty about its extension will raise interest rates. Who will pay the price? Americans across the board.

When we want to buy a car, we will pay a higher interest rate. When we want to buy a home, we will pay a higher interest rate. If we want to start a business and expand and hire more people, if we can borrow money, it will be at a higher interest rate. This will slow down our recovery at a time when we need just the opposite.

So let me suggest that those who believe, as I do—and I think I have put up my beliefs for display when it comes to this deficit—that we need a bipartisan approach that is serious, for goodness' sakes, let's not bargain with the debt ceiling. Let's do what is right for America in a bipartisan fashion and then stand up together and accept the responsibility of governing, the responsibility of reaching a decision and moving forward.

When we see a bill such as the Economic Development Administration bill die on the Senate floor, as we did last night, it is a reminder of how partisanship run amok can hurt us when America needs leadership the most. To put 100 amendments on the floor to a bill as simple as this—it used to pass with a voice vote—is an indication there are some in the Senate who want to accomplish absolutely nothing except partisan debate. That is not good for this country. If the best thing we can do at the end of the day, after all 100 Senators come filing through the door, is to pass some resolution extolling the virtue of someone across America—if that is the best we can

do—maybe we don't deserve these paychecks we are being sent. Maybe it is time for the American people to demand an accounting of those elected to office.

We have to be ready to not only make the speeches and make the political points, but we have to stand and make a difference. That means standing together. It means taking a risk of putting everything on the table and getting America moving. If we can get this deficit resolved, we can convince people across this country and around the world we are serious about it and we are going to launch an economic recovery that will create jobs and help businesses and make us a stronger nation and give our kids a chance. The alternative is unacceptable.

Today, I hope my colleagues—if they believe we should move forward on a bipartisan basis to deal with this deficit and to put everything on the table now and get down to business—will come to the floor and say as much.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Madam President, I understand I have 10 minutes to speak; is that correct?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct.

Mr. CORKER. If the Chair will show me the courtesy of letting me know if I happen to get within 2 minutes of that.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair will.

Mr. CORKER. Madam President, I rise to speak on the same topic the Senator from Illinois was speaking about; that is, the discussions taking place right now around the debt ceiling vote and what kind of arrangement or what kind of agreement can take place. These are called the Blair House negotiations. They are happening between the Vice President of the United States—the actual President of the Senate when he is here—and leaders on both the Republican and Democratic side of the House and Senate.

What I wish to speak about today stems from reading some of the public comments. I am concerned the type of deal they may be trying to seek is not something many of us in this body would even agree to if they reached it, meaning it is far more modest than I think most of us have been looking at. It is my understanding they are going to be meeting all week. It is my understanding they had hoped to reach an agreement by next week. So my reason for coming to the floor is to ask the Vice President and those others who are involved in this to publicly tell us by the end of next week what deal it is they are trying to accomplish and in what timeframe.

I think all of us are frustrated. We work in the Senate, and as the Senator from Illinois was just mentioning, we have done absolutely nothing in this body this year—nothing. We have voted on a few noncontroversial judges—

maybe we have done slightly more than that, but almost nothing—while our country languishes, worrying about what we are going to do with these budget debates. As a matter of fact, we haven't passed a budget now in something like 770 days.

So here we are shelling out taxpayer money each year—\$3.5 trillion, \$3.7 trillion—and we don't have a budget, which is about as irresponsible as one can be.

Actually, there are groups working on other solutions. I think it would be good for this body to know what kind of arrangement is being looked at, what kind of goals are trying to be achieved, and in what timeframe they are going to be achieved so that people will know with some degree of certainty whether there is going to be something achieved to which we would agree.

Let me give an example. One of the things I have heard is, we are going to have the same amount of debt limit extension as we do in reductions, meaning we will have \$2.4 trillion in debt ceiling additions and \$2.4 trillion in cuts. The problem is, the debt extension is over an 18-month period and the cuts are over a 10-year period. So we can see there is a vast discrepancy in what is taking place. The semantics may sound good, but the result, candidly, is not near what I believe the American people would like to see, nor what I believe financial markets would like to see. So if our goal is something we know on the front end is not even acceptable to this body, it seems to me it is not rational for us to be sitting here waiting on this group at the Blair House to make a deal we all know is not good enough.

So I hope by the end of next week this group who is negotiating will come forth and tell us what it is they are trying to achieve, the likelihood of achieving it, and in what timeframe.

I am also hearing there are discussions that we do not believe we will reach a deal by the August recess. There have been some public comments about short-term extensions. I cannot imagine going home to the people of Tennessee for recess on August 6 and telling them: We are on August recess, and I am here to tell you we haven't done a thing—not one thing—to reach a deal on how many cuts are going to take place in spending relative to our debt ceiling extension. But I am here in Tennessee to tell you that we are on recess, and we have accomplished nothing.

I cannot imagine us doing that as a body.

The other thing I am hearing is we may be looking at a short-term extension to move beyond the August recess, to get us back into this fall. Maybe that is a way of dealing with this issue. But, again, if we adopt a short-term extension to try to give us time to reach a deal we all know is unacceptable on the front end, why would we give a short-term extension? So it just seems

to me the most responsible happening would be for negotiators on both sides to tell this body—this body which has done nothing of importance this year—maybe a few minor things, not much; We spent no time dealing with serious issues; no time dealing with a budget; no time trying to deal publicly with the issues of deficit reduction—to let us know where they are.

It seems to me a number of people in this body are getting very restless. They see what is happening. We have seen this movie before where we bump up against a deadline and we have to make a decision up or down because “it is going to create havoc in the marketplace.” It seems to me, again, the responsible thing for the Blair House group to do is to let us know where they are at the end of this next week so if Members of this body wanted to figure out a different route to go because they thought the route that was being taken was not acceptable, not good enough—as a matter of fact, I noticed yesterday where the chairman of the Budget Committee on the other side of the aisle has said the things he has heard are not good enough for him. I can tell my colleagues they are not good enough for me. So the goal we are trying to achieve is not something I would even agree to.

So maybe if we cannot get some degree of clarity as to what is happening at the Blair House and some degree of update, maybe there is some other route we should take or maybe the market should know well in advance that this body does not have the discipline, does not have the ability, does not have the courage to deal with what we know is an upcoming calamity—a calamity that is either going to occur because we cannot reach agreement and we do not raise the debt ceiling or a calamity that occurs a little bit down the road because we have not shown the fiscal discipline in this body to put our house in order, knowing that at some point in time the markets will run from us, interest rates will rise, people will no longer be willing to loan us money because we have shown how irresponsible we are and we have a calamity on that end.

So let me restate, I am 58 years old. I came to this body to solve problems. If there is going to be a calamity, I want the calamity to occur while I am here so I can deal with it and take responsibility for it versus kicking the can down the road for somebody else to have to deal with the fact that we as a body are irresponsible.

In closing, Madam President, thank you for the time. I implore the folks who are meeting behind closed doors—implore them—to come forward and to outline the goals they are trying to achieve and when they think they are going to achieve them so all of us who are sitting around here cooling our heels, doing nothing—doing almost nothing of importance for this country—the Senator from Illinois talked about the EDA bill. We all knew it was

not going to pass. Everybody knew that. Everybody knew that bill was offered on the floor to kill time, to make it look as though the Senate was doing something. That is all it was for. Everybody knew that. Everybody working up front knew that. The pages knew that. Everybody knew that. So for people to come down here and act as if it is a shock that cloture was not achieved on EDA when we knew it was here just for a filler is kind of surprising. We knew what it was about.

So I would like for us to get on with dealing with the most important issue our country has to deal with; that is, the huge amount of deficit spending, where every day we are spending \$4.1 billion we do not have. Every day we are borrowing 40 cents of that from other folks. Every day we are causing this country, because of that, to be in decline—hopefully, we will rectify that, but to be in decline, lowering the standard of living of all Americans because we in this body do not show the capability, the will, the desire to solve that problem.

I am hoping—I am hoping—the Blair House negotiations yield a result. I really do. That is why I think all of us are being patient as they meet in private, sharing no details about what they are doing. But at the end of this week, the end of this work period, I think it is time they come forth to give us a status as to where they are so that if there are other routes that ought to be taken, people have the ability to do that.

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

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. 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.

#### SOCIAL SECURITY

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Madam President, I rise today to discuss Social Security and its future.

This is certainly an issue that affects all Americans, and now is the time we can address it in a way that will not be horribly obtrusive to the people who will be on Social Security in 25 years, when it just hits the bottom and we have stark realities that are going to hurt people. We can avoid that.

Last Thursday, I introduced, with Senator JON KYL as an original cosponsor, S. 1213, the Defend and Save Social Security Act, a bill that will secure Social Security for the next 75 years without raising taxes and without cutting core benefits to anyone.

Madam President, 28 years ago this past April, Congress and President Reagan came together in a bipartisan manner and acted decisively to address Social Security's finances to save the