

any serious plan would have to be in the trillions to get the job done. That is why even the Democratic chairman of the Budget Committee said this week that he wouldn't even support a plan that proposed to cut less than \$4 trillion over the next 10 years. That is also why it is so concerning to many of us that some have begun to suggest a different goal for these talks.

Over the past several days, some have suggested in various news stories that the real goal of these talks is to devise a plan that satisfies one side by reducing the debt and satisfies the other side by raising taxes. The suggestion here is that all this is all just some quid pro quo exercise between the two parties. This is a dangerous trend, and it is wrong. It is important that we dispel it.

The central issue in these talks, as every serious person knows, is our Nation's massive deficit and debt and the disastrous long-term consequences for jobs and the economy that would result if we do absolutely nothing about it. We have this problem for one very understandable reason: The government spends too much. The way to solve it is to spend less.

It is mystifying, really, that at the eleventh hour some would now propose tax hikes as a condition to any agreement. It is mystifying not only because of the absurdity of proposing a tax hike as a way to help the economy and create jobs, it is mystifying above all because we know quite well that a tax hike would never make it through Congress, not because of Republican opposition but because of Republican and Democratic opposition. We have already had the votes to prove it. Six months ago, Democrats couldn't even muster enough votes to pass a tax hike on upper income Americans when they had 59 seats in the Senate, a 40-seat majority in the House, and a Democrat in the White House. They couldn't get that done 6 months ago. Less than 2 weeks later, right after that effort to raise taxes, which they couldn't get done, they voted almost 4 to 1 in favor of keeping the current tax rates in place. That was when the Democrats had a huge majority in the Senate, a huge majority in the House, and a President of the United States. They couldn't raise taxes.

So there is one of two things going on here: Either someone on the other side has forgotten that there is strong bipartisan opposition in Congress to raising taxes or someone involved is acting in bad faith. We have known from the beginning that tax hikes would be a poison pill to any deficit reduction proposal. Those who are proposing them now either know this or they need to realize it very quickly.

That is to say nothing of those who are now proposing more spending as a solution to our debt crisis. This isn't just mystifying, it is absolutely farcical. Most Americans had to wonder if they were dreaming this morning when they saw this headline: "Democrats

Call for New Spending in U.S. Debt Deal." It is unbelievable. More spending as a solution to the debt crisis? What planet are they on?

All of which gets at the larger issue in this whole debate, and here I am referring to the continuing silence of the one person who matters most to its outcome.

For weeks, lawmakers have worked around the clock to hammer out a plan that would help us avert a crisis we all know is coming. Do you remember what Admiral Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said when asked what our biggest national security threat was? He said: Our debt. Erskine Bowles, Bill Clinton's Chief of Staff, Cochairman of the deficit reduction commission, called it the most predictable crisis in American history. We all know this crisis is coming, knowing at some point the President will have to sign on to some solution. So it is worth asking, where in the world has President Obama been for the last month? Where is he? What does he propose? What is he willing to do to reduce the debt and to avoid this crisis that is building on his watch? He is the one in charge. I think most Americans think it is about time he started acting like it.

It is not enough for the President to step in front of a microphone every once in a while and say a few words that somebody hands him to say about the jobs situation and our economy. Americans want to see that he is actually doing something about it. What they see instead is more bad economic news every day, a gathering crisis that threatens to make current problems even worse, and a President who is either unwilling or unable to recognize that our Nation's economy is in very serious trouble. He is the President. He needs to lead. He needs to show that he recognizes the problem. He needs to do something about it. We are not in the majority. We can't sign anything into law. That is the President's job. That is his job. Yet, until now, he has stood in the background. He has acted as if it is not his problem. Well, it is his problem. This is his problem to solve. America is waiting.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following any leader remarks, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 11:30 today, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half. Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of the Presidential Appointment Efficiency and Streamlining Act, with 30 minutes of debate

on the Vitter amendment regarding czars and the DeMint amendment regarding Bureau of Justice Statistics. At approximately 12 p.m. there will be two rollcall votes in relation to the Vitter and DeMint amendments. We are looking at that now.

A number of Senators have a problem with two votes. We may only have one. We don't have that worked out yet, but we will notify all Senators when we do. We are going to very likely have a number of rollcall votes right after the noon hour today, starting around 2 o'clock. Other votes are expected.

THE DEBT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, for the last month or 6 weeks the Vice President of the United States, JOE BIDEN, who served in this body for 36 years, has been assigned by the President of the United States to work with people who have been assigned by me, Senator MCCONNELL, the minority leader in the House, and the Speaker to meet with Senator BIDEN to work out problems that we have facing our country with this huge debt. Senator BIDEN has been working very hard. There have been numerous meetings with this group of people that we assigned. Progress is being made. Whether it is enough progress remains to be seen.

The President of the United States gets up early every morning, gets an intelligence report about what is going on around the world—there are a lot of things going on around the world that he has to keep his eye on, and that is an understatement. We have had many issues come about this last month on which he has had to focus. No one can suggest in any way the President is not engaged in what is going on in the country. He is briefed at least once a day by the Vice President as to these negotiations. Following that, almost every day he meets with his advisers as to what should be the next step.

I think it is unfair to say things such as, "Where is the President?" I think it is fair to take a little look at history. When George Bush became President, following that time of 8 years of President Clinton, he was given reports at his desk in the White House that showed there was about a \$7 trillion surplus over the next 10 years. We had developed, during the years of President Clinton, a number of procedures. One was the pay-go rules. We made sure if there was a new program that we couldn't pay for, we would take some money from another program, take the money we used for that and use it to take care of the new program. It was a time of economic vibrancy in this country that we have never seen before.

President Bush got rid of the pay-go rules and decided to do something unique. He decided to do everything on credit—two unfunded wars that are now approaching \$2 trillion in cost, none of which is paid for, money we borrowed from Saudi Arabia and China

and other countries—and then we gave President Bush's huge tax cuts that have been deemed by most all writers around America and around the country to be unfair.

Warren Buffett, who some believe is the richest man in the world, said it is unfair that he pays less taxes percentage-wise than his secretary. So this \$7 trillion surplus we had over 10 years, the Bush administration wiped that out with all these wars unpaid for and all these tax and other actions that were taken.

When President Obama became President, there had been 8 million jobs lost, and he found himself in a big hole. I think one of the things we should do is stop denigrating the economy of our country. Is it vibrant and strong? Of course not, but it is improving. It is getting better—not fast enough, not good enough, but it is improving.

So I say to my friend, my counterpart, the Republican leader, who says the only place we can solve the problems of this country is just to basically cut domestic programs significantly, we know we are going to have to do a better job of balancing the budget because of the cards that were given to President Obama. We are going to be doing our very best to do that. But the one interesting point my friend failed to mention as he talked about the Bowles-Simpson debt reduction program is they said, among other things: Of course, we have to make significant cuts in domestic discretionary spending, in defense, in mandatory programs. They looked at some of the work we needed to do with entitlements. But they also said there had to be something done with revenue. My friend ignores what they said about that.

They also said; that is, Bowles-Simpson, together with the people who were on that Commission—and I made a number of appointments to that Commission—they said: Yes, we need to do some cutting, but these next few years we have to spend some money to create jobs. We hear not a word from my Republican colleagues about creating jobs.

The House of Representatives, all they do is flex their muscles on things they want to eliminate. But the one thing they do not talk about is creating jobs—not a word.

This week my Republican colleagues killed their fourth jobs bill this year. The Economic Development Administration reauthorization was common-sense legislation with a proven track record of spurring innovation and hiring by private companies because for every dollar we spent as a government, \$7 came back in return from the private sector. They killed our fourth jobs bill this year. It seems Republicans don't care about putting Americans back to work. They don't even pay lip service to the issue.

Americans have said they care more about creating jobs than anything else. In fact, yesterday the junior Senator

from Tennessee, a Republican, said right here on the Senate floor that this effort to create and protect, as we did the last few years, 314,000 jobs was "nothing of importance." That is a direct quote. I am confident the 14 million Americans out of work today, including many from Tennessee and every other State in our country, would disagree with the Senator from Tennessee.

He also went on to say, this junior Senator from Tennessee—I repeat, who is a Republican—he went on to say that this worthy legislation, our fourth jobs bill of this Congress, was nothing more than an attempt to "kill time." He said it is an attempt to kill time. He went on also, I repeat, to say it was unimportant.

Republicans may consider job creation a waste of time, but Democrats disagree and Americans disagree—Democrats, Republicans, and Independents alike. We are not going to stop fighting to get Americans back to work until we get our economy back on track. We cannot solve our problems without jobs creation. Congress has no more important task than creating jobs. There is no better way for us to spend our time, there is no issue more important than job development. This legislation, which, again, would have supported 314,000 jobs, as it did in the last 5 years, is an important part of that effort.

But don't take my word for it. The junior Senator from Tennessee said this about the Economic Development Administration 2 years ago. This is what he said prior to his saying that it was a waste of time, prior to his saying that it was not of importance. Here is what he said. This is a direct quote, less than 2 years ago:

In the midst of an economic crisis, projects like these are just the kinds of things that will renew confidence and reinvigorate private investment in the area.

That is what he said. He said "EDA funds protect jobs and support economic growth." Why, then, didn't he vote that way? No wonder the junior Republican Senator from Tennessee had such high praise for the program. EDA investments over the last 5 years will support an estimated 7,000 jobs in Tennessee. But in spite of his previous support, he voted to kill this worthy legislation anyway. And he is not the only Republican whose words don't match their actions.

His counterpart, the senior Senator from Tennessee, also a Republican, also supported EDA and those 7,000 jobs once. He did it before. He said an EDA grant would "bring a much needed boost to the local economy." Just a few days ago he voted to kill the program.

Last month, the junior Senator from Texas, also a Republican, said an EDA grant in his State would "pave the way for the creation of new jobs." He said it would "strengthen the region's economy." EDA investments from the last 5 years are expected to support more

than 18,000 jobs in Texas. Yet he voted to kill the program.

The senior Republican Senator from Oklahoma said he has "long been a supporter of EDA programs." That is a direct quote. EDA investments from the last 5 years are expected to support more than 5,000 jobs in Oklahoma. He is such a big supporter he was an original cosponsor of the legislation, but he voted to kill it.

These are only 3 of 23 Republican Senators who lauded the importance of this legislation and then voted against it.

Nevada has been hit harder by this terrible recession than any other State. EDA investments from the last 5 years are responsible for creating almost 5,000 jobs in Nevada. The legislation Republicans killed this week could have created hundreds of thousands more jobs all across America. I take it very seriously when a Republican Senator says putting thousands of people to work is a waste of time. The real waste of time is this endless obstructionism by Republican Senators. They waste the Senate's time when they put partisan politics ahead of our economic recovery.

Americans have told us time and time again, putting 14 million people back to work is their No. 1 priority. Democrats share that priority. Obviously, the Republicans do not. Their goal is to change Medicare as we know it, to end it. Believe me, thousands of Nevadans who are working today because of EDA don't think our efforts to create jobs are nothing of importance, as the junior Senator from Tennessee said. In fact, we have heard from out-of-work people in Nevada and every other State in this great country that there is absolutely nothing more important than job creation.

Would the Chair now announce morning business, please.

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 until 11:30 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

The Senator from Hawaii is recognized.

Mr. AKAKA. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. AKAKA pertaining to the introduction of S. 1262 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")