

firm on my position that we ought not even consider any tax increase at a time when we can least afford it.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of quorum.

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask that I be allowed to speak as in morning business.

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

### THE BUDGET

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, this is a pivotal moment in the history of our country. In the coming days and weeks, decisions will be made about our national budget that will impact the lives of virtually every American in this country for decades to come. The time is now for the American people to become significantly involved in that debate and not leave it to a small number of people here in Washington.

At a time when the wealthiest people and the largest corporations in our country are doing phenomenally well and in many cases have never had it so good, while the middle class is disappearing and poverty is increasing, it is absolutely imperative that any deficit-reduction package that passes this Congress not include the horrendous cuts, the cruel cuts in programs that working people desperately need that are utilized every day by the elderly, by the sick, by our children, and by the lowest income people in our country, that the Republicans in Congress, dominated by their extreme rightwing, are demanding.

America is not about giving tax breaks to billionaires and attacking the most vulnerable people in our country. We must not allow that to happen.

In my view, the President of the United States needs to stand with the vast majority of the American people and say no to the Republican leadership and make it clear that enough is enough. No, we will not balance the budget on the backs of the most vulnerable people in this country—on our children, on our seniors and the sick. No, we will not do that. Working families in this country have already sacrificed enough in terms of lost jobs, lost wages, lost homes, lost pensions. The working families of this country are hurting right now. Enough is enough.

Now is the time to say to the millionaires and the billionaires in this country and to the largest corporations that in many ways have never had it so good that they must participate in deficit reduction, that there must be

shared sacrifice, that deficit reduction cannot be based on cutting back on the needs of working families and the middle class but that the rich and large corporations have also got to participate in this process.

Furthermore, it is absolutely necessary, if we are talking about a sensible deficit-reduction package, that we take a hard look at unnecessary and wasteful spending at the Pentagon.

Let's make it very clear that we will not be blackmailed again by the Republican leadership in Washington that is threatening to destroy the full faith and credit of the U.S. Government so that, for the very first time in our Nation's history, we might not pay the bills we owe. That is their threat. We will destroy the record of always paying our bills, never failing to do that, unless they get everything they want.

Instead of yielding to the incessant, extreme Republican demands, as the President in many respects did in last December's tax cut agreement and this year's spending negotiations, the President has to get out of the beltway. He has to connect with the needs of working families and ordinary Americans and rally the overwhelming majority of our people who believe that deficit reduction must be based on shared sacrifice, that the wealthy and the powerful and the large corporations cannot continue to get everything they want while we wage a cruel and unprecedented attack on the most vulnerable people in this country. It is time for President Obama to stand with the millions who have already lost their jobs, their homes, their life savings, instead of the millionaires, who in many cases have never had it so good.

Unless the American people in huge numbers tell the President not to yield 1 inch to Republican demands to destroy Medicare and Medicaid while continuing to provide tax breaks to the wealthy and the powerful, unless the American people rise up and say enough is enough, I am afraid that what will happen is the President will yield once again and the wealthy and the powerful will laugh all the way to the bank, while working people will be devastated.

Today, I am asking the American people that if you believe deficit reduction should be about shared sacrifice; if you believe the wealthiest people in our country and the largest corporations should be asked to pay their fair share as part of deficit reduction; if you believe that, at a time when military spending has almost tripled since 1997, we must begin to take a hard look at our defense budget; and if you believe the middle-class and working families have already sacrificed enough, I urge you to make sure the President hears your voice, and he needs to hear it now. I urge the American people to go to my Web site, [sanders.senate.gov](http://sanders.senate.gov), and sign a letter to the President letting him know that enough is enough. I also urge the American people to contact the White

House directly through their Web sites and leave a message for the President there.

As you know, this country faces enormous challenges. In fact, we have not suffered through such a difficult moment since the Great Depression of the 1930s. We do not talk about it very much, but the reality is that the middle class in this country is disappearing while at the same time poverty is increasing.

When we talk about the state of our economy, it is important to talk about it within the context of deficit reduction because when you understand what is going on in the economy, you know you cannot get blood out of a stone. You cannot keep attacking people who have been devastated in the last few years in terms of unemployment, in terms of losses of pension, in terms of losses of health care.

When we talk about the economy, we have to understand that the situation is in many cases even worse than official statistics indicate. For example, we read in the papers that the official unemployment rate is now 9.1 percent. But the truth is—and no economist disagrees with this—that official statistic ignores the number of people who have given up looking for work and people who are working part time when they want to work full time. If you add all of that together, you are looking at a real unemployment rate in this country of about 16 percent. Are those really the people whom we should go to for deficit reduction? Are they not suffering enough right now? Young people graduating college who can't find a job, let's hit them hard. Older people who have lost their jobs and can't find a new one or are working for half the wages they previously worked at, let's go after those people. Fifty million people have no health insurance. Let's attack them. Working mothers and fathers cannot find affordable childcare. Let's go after them.

We must understand that when we look at the economy, the middle class is hurting and hurting badly. Over the last 10 years, on top of the high unemployment rates, the median family income in this country has declined by over \$2,500. Do you know why working families are angry? That is why they are angry. They are working longer hours for lower wages. Are those really the people you want to ask to balance the budget? I don't think so. I think any sense of fairness, any sense of morality that one might have suggests you do not beat up on people who are already suffering. You don't try to get blood out of a stone.

As a result of the greed and the recklessness and the illegal behavior on Wall Street which caused this terrible recession, millions more Americans have lost their homes, they have lost their pensions, and they have lost their retirement savings. We hear it every day in calls that come to our offices. Unless we reverse our current economic costs, our children will have, for

the very first time in modern American history, a lower standard of living than their parents. It is the American dream in reverse. Kids are going to do worse than their parents unless we reverse current economic trends.

We can throw out a lot of numbers around here, a few hundred billion and a trillion. But the truth is that behind those numbers in my State of Vermont and all over this country, there are real people who are hurting terribly, and as Members of the Senate our job is to pay attention to those people and not just the well-paid lobbyists, representing the most powerful special interests in the world, who surround this Capitol every single day.

Last year I asked my constituents in Vermont to share some personal stories with me. I asked them basically: How are you doing in this recession? The stories I got back from Vermont, I am sure, are absolutely similar to the stories you would get in Delaware or anyone would get in Michigan or any other State in this country. I asked them: How are things going? Let me tell you as a result of the e-mail we sent out, we had more than 400 Vermonters responding to that e-mail, and what they had to say was poignant. Sometimes these stories were so powerful, it was almost hard to read more than a few at a time. The message I received from Vermont—I suspect similar messages are coming from every State in this country—is that people are finding it hard to get jobs. They are now working for lower wages than they used to earn. We are seeing older workers who have depleted their life's savings, and they are worried about how they are going to retire. What happens to them when they are unable to work anymore? Who is going to take care of them?

We hear from young adults in their twenties and thirties who are deeply in debt from college loans, and they don't know how they are going to pay off those loans. We hear from people of all ages, all walks of life, from every corner of Vermont, who have sent us their stories. Let me read a few of them, to make the point to put some flesh and blood behind the statistics we often throw out.

We have a letter from a 51-year-old woman from central Vermont. This is what she wrote:

Dear Senator Sanders, Don't really know what to say, I could cry. My significant other was out of work for a year, now he works in another state. I've been out of work since April. Our mortgage company wants the house because we can't make the payments. I can't find a job to save my soul that will pay enough to make a difference. How bad does it have to get! My mother went through the Great Depression and here we go again. I figure that I'm going to lose everything soon! I'm a well educated person who can't see through the fog.

A gentleman in his mid-fifties from Orange County, VT, writes:

After being unemployed three times since 1999 due to global trade agreements, I now find myself managing a hazardous waste

transfer facility that pays about 25 percent than what I was making in 1999.

You hear that all of the time. Yes, many people, of course, are working, but many older workers today are dealing with the humiliation and the economic tragedy of now earning substantially less than they earned 10 or 20 years ago.

He continues:

My wife's children have moved back in, unemployed. And we are saving very little for retirement. If things don't improve soon we will likely have to work until we die. We consider ourselves lucky that we are employed. Our children's friends tend to show up around meal time. They are skinny. We feed them. This is no recession, it's a modern day depression.

Are those the people we want to go after when we talk about deficit reduction? Are they not suffering enough already?

A woman in her late forties from Westminster, VT, writes:

I am a single mom in Vermont, nearly 50. I patch together a full time job making \$12 an hour and various painting jobs and still can't afford to get myself out of debt, or make necessary repairs on my home. No other jobs in sight, I apply all the time to no avail. Food and gas bills go up and up, but not my income. I have no retirement at all, can't afford to move, feeling stuck, tired, and hopeless.

"Stuck, tired and hopeless." I suspect that sentiment reflects how many millions of Americans are feeling today.

I have another letter from a 26-year-old man from Barre, VT. He writes:

In 2002, I received a scholarship to Saint Bonaventure University, the first in my family to attend college. Upon graduation in 2006, I was admitted to the Dickinson School of Law at Penn State University, and graduated in 2009 with \$150,000 of student loan debt.

Mr. President, \$150,000. That is high. But there are people all over this country who have extremely high student loans, and they don't know how they are going to pay them off.

Then he continues:

In Western New York I can find nothing better than a \$10 an hour position stuffing envelopes. I live in a small studio apartment in Barre without cable or Internet. I have told my family I don't want them to visit because I am ashamed of my surroundings. My family always told me that an education was the ticket to success, but all my education seems to have done in this landscape is make it impossible to pull myself out of debt and begin a successful career.

On and on it goes. Over the last couple of weeks we have been focusing in my office on the crisis in dental care, the fact that in Vermont and all over this country millions of people cannot find a dentist.

I want to give you an idea. I am raising these issues today, and I am quoting from folks in Vermont. Again, these stories are not just from Vermont. In fact, Vermont is doing better in this recession than most States in this country are doing. So take what we are talking about here in Vermont and multiply it by several times for other States.

A gentleman writes to me within the last couple of weeks. He says: "I can't afford health insurance, so dental work is definitely out." And he talks about how studies have linked bad dental care to heart problems and cancer, but he cannot get to a dentist.

The reason I raise this issue is to try to give us a better understanding of who some of the people are who will be impacted by the Draconian cuts the Republicans are talking about. Let us be clear. They are talking about throwing millions and millions of people off Medicaid.

Let me tell you what that means. Earlier this year, as you know, Arizona passed budget cuts that took patients off its transplant list. Remember reading about that? I think most of the country read about that. Essentially because of the financial reasons, what they said in Arizona is: Yes, you need a transplant; yes, you are not all that old, but I am sorry, we cannot afford it for you, and you are going to have to die. And people have died. In that State and in other States throughout this country hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people are being thrown off Medicaid.

So what does that mean? What does it mean if you are a low-income worker and you are getting your health insurance through Medicaid and you lose Medicaid? What happens when you develop a pain in your chest and you think you may be having a heart problem but you cannot get to a doctor? What happens? Have our Republican friends thought that through when they proposed \$700 billion in cuts in Medicaid? What happens to the children by the millions who are thrown off Medicaid? We have 50 million people today who have no health insurance. If the Republican plan goes through, we are talking about tens of millions more. What happens to those people? As Americans are we content to see kids get sick because they cannot get to a doctor or people die because they don't get to a doctor on time? I don't think so.

I have learned and have been told throughout my whole life that education is the key to success. We hear that on the floor of this Senate every single day. Education, education. Kids have got to do well in high school so they will be able to go to college. The reality right now is hundreds of thousands of bright young people cannot afford to go to college because they don't have the money, and we are losing their intellectual capabilities to make us a stronger nation. If the Republicans get their way, and make savage cuts in Pell grants, no one has any doubt that hundreds of thousands more young people will never be able to walk into a college or a university. That is not only a tragedy for the individuals, for the young people themselves, it is a tragedy for this Nation. Every day we are involved in fierce competition in the global economy, and we are not doing well in educational levels. We are

seeing other countries graduate more of their students from college, and that gap is growing wider. If you cut back on Pell grants and other forms of college aid, it is clear that a bad situation will be made much worse.

Let's get even more basic, more basic than health care, more basic than education, and that comes to nutrition, whether people in larger and larger numbers in this country are going to go hungry. According to a 2009 study, there are over 5 million seniors who face the threat of hunger, almost 3 million who are at risk of going hungry and almost 1 million seniors who do go hungry because they cannot afford to buy food. In that context our Republican friends want to balance the budget on the backs of the hungry, cut back on food stamps, cut back on other nutrition programs. So what happens if you are 80 and food prices are going up and you don't have enough to eat? Well, apparently there are some people here in the Senate who don't worry about that, but I personally do not believe that is what America is about. I think the American people, by huge numbers, do not want to see hunger increase for our seniors or our children.

This is a lot of pain the Republicans are tossing out while at the same time they are vigorously protecting their wealthy and powerful friends. In my view, the President of the United States has to stand tall. He has to take the case to the American people and he has to hold the Republicans responsible if, in fact, the debt ceiling is not raised, and all of the repercussions that will occur if that happens.

I have given you just an inkling of what is going on in the real world, and I know all over this country, ordinary Americans, working-class people, have a lot more to say about what is going on in their lives. As we speak, people are fighting desperately to keep their homes from falling into foreclosure. They are struggling with 29 percent, 30 percent interest rates on their credit cards, which they are never able to pay off. Marriages have been postponed because the young people don't have the money to settle down, lives have been derailed, retirement savings have been raided to pay for college tuition or to keep businesses afloat or to simply put gas in the car at \$3.80 a gallon in order to get to work. That is what is going on in the real world. That is what it means when we talk about the middle-class collapsing and poverty is increasing.

While all of that happens, it is important to note there is another economic reality taking place in this country. Poverty is increasing. We have the highest rate of childhood poverty of any major country on Earth. We are seeing an increase in senior citizens who are going hungry, more and more families unable to send their kids to college. But there is another reality out there, and that is that the gap between the wealthiest people in this country and everybody else is growing

wider and wider and has not been this wide since before the Great Depression of 1929 began. Let us be very clear, and there is nothing to be proud about, but the United States today has, by far, the most unequal distribution of wealth and income of any major country on Earth.

Today, the top 1 percent earns over 20 percent of all income in this country, which is more than the bottom 50 percent. One percent owns more income than the bottom 50 percent. Over the recent 25-year period, 80 percent of all new income created in this country went to the top 1 percent. Even more dramatic, even more incredible, even more unfair in terms of distribution of wealth, which is accumulated income, as hard as it may be to comprehend, in America today the top 400 individuals own more wealth than the bottom 150 million Americans. Again, 400 Americans own more wealth than the bottom 150 million Americans.

Given those realities, it doesn't take a Ph.D. in economics to suggest that when we move forward with deficit reduction, that deficit reduction must include shared sacrifice. The wealthy and large corporations also have to help this country deal with record-breaking deficit.

The reality is simple but unfortunate. That reality is that the rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer, and the middle class continues to disappear. That is what is going on in this country, and there is no hiding it. We have to acknowledge it. We have to go on from there.

Everyone knows that in our country today we are facing a major deficit crisis, and we have a national debt of over \$14 trillion. What has not been widely discussed and what must be discussed is how we got into that deficit situation in the first place. If we are going to deal with the deficit, we have to know how we got into it. What is very clear is that this huge record-breaking deficit and a \$14 trillion national debt did not just happen overnight, and it didn't happen by accident. It happened, in fact, as a result of a number of policy decisions made over the last decade and votes that were cast right here on the floor of the Senate and in the House of Representatives.

When we talk about the deficit and the national debt, let's never forget that in January of 2001—a little over 10 years ago—when President Bill Clinton left office, this country had an annual Federal budget surplus of \$236 billion with projected budget surpluses as far as the eye could see. That was when Clinton left office some 10 years ago. Now we have a \$1.5 trillion deficit and a growing national debt.

It is totally appropriate as we talk about deficit reduction that we ask some simple questions: How did we get to where we are today in terms of the deficit? What happened in that ensuing 10 years? How did we go from huge projected surpluses into horrendous debt? The answer really is not complicated,

and there is not a lot of disagreement. We know exactly what has happened. The Congressional Budget Office has documented it. There was an interesting article on the front page of the Washington Post on April 30 talking about it as well, and here is what happened. I don't think there is a lot of disagreement about this.

When our Nation spends \$1 trillion on wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and forgets to pay for those wars, we run up a deficit. When we provide over \$700 billion in tax breaks to the wealthiest people in this country and choose not to offset those tax breaks, we run up a deficit. When we pass a Medicare Part D prescription drug program written by the drug companies and the insurance companies that does not allow Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices and ends up costing us far more than it should—\$400 billion over a 10-year period—and we don't pay for that, we run up a deficit. When we double military spending since 1997, not including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and we don't pay for that, we run up the deficit.

Now, I always find it amusing when some of my Republican colleagues come to the floor and lecture some of us about how serious the deficit is and how serious the national debt is. Yet, ironically, many of us voted against those proposals which, in fact, caused the deficit crisis we are in right now. I paid a lot of attention during the debate over the war in Iraq. I don't recall many of our friends on the Republican side or the Democrats who voted for that war saying: Gee, we can't go to war because it is going to cost this country a huge sum of money. I don't remember hearing that.

When we bailed out Wall Street to the tune of \$700 billion, I don't recall many of my friends saying: Oh, my goodness, we can't afford to do that. When we gave \$700 billion in tax breaks to the wealthiest people in this country, where was the concern then about deficit reduction? Further, and maybe even most significant, the deficit we are in right now was caused by the recession we are in, which was, of course, caused by the greed and illegal behavior on Wall Street, which caused the economic condition of the moment: massive unemployment and loss of a very substantial amount of revenue that otherwise would have come into our tax coffers.

The end result of all of these unpaid-for policies and actions year after year of the deficits I just described is a staggering amount of debt. When President Bush left office, President Obama inherited an annual deficit of \$1.3 trillion with deficits as far as the eye could see, and the national debt more than doubled—more than doubled—under President Bush because of all of these policy decisions made by Republicans and some Democrats. The reality is, if we did not go to war in Iraq, if we did not pass huge tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires, if we did not pass

a prescription drug program with no cost control written by the drug and insurance companies, and if we did not deregulate Wall Street which allowed them to do the things they did, which ended up in Wall Street's collapse and the ensuing recession, we would not find ourselves in the mess we are in today. It really is that simple.

In other words, the only reason we have to increase our Nation's debt ceiling today is that we are forced to pay the bills the Republican leadership in Congress—and some Democrats—and President Bush racked up.

Given the decline in the middle class, given the increase in poverty, and given the fact that the wealthy and large corporations have never had it so good, Americans might find it strange that the Republicans in Washington would use this moment to make savage cuts in Medicare, Medicaid, education, nutrition assistance, and other life-and-death programs, while at the same time pushing for even more tax breaks for the wealthiest people in this country and the largest corporations. Unfortunately, while the average American may think this is pretty weird, inside the beltway that is exactly what happens, and this is very much part of the Republican ideology.

Republicans in Washington have never believed in Medicaid or in Medicare or in Federal assistance in education or providing any direct government assistance to those in need. They have always believed tax breaks for the wealthy and the powerful would somehow miraculously trickle down to every American despite all history and all evidence to the contrary. So in that sense it is not strange at all that they would use the deficit crisis we are now in as an opportunity for an ideological attack against some of the most vulnerable people in our country.

That is exactly what the Ryan Republican budget, passed in the House of Representatives earlier this year and supported by the vast majority of Republicans in the Senate just last month, is all about. It is a long budget, so let me give just a few examples of what the Ryan Republican budget would do.

The Republican budget passed by the House this year would end Medicare as we know it within 10 years. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that under the Ryan proposal, in 2022, a private health care plan for a 65-year-old equivalent to Medicare coverage would cost about \$20,500. Yet the Republican budget would provide a voucher for only \$8,000 of those premiums. Seniors would be on their own to pay the remaining \$12,500, a full 61 percent of the total. Now, how many of the 20 million near elderly Americans who are now ages 50 to 54 will be able to afford that?

So let's review what we have. Let's say when a person becomes 65 in 10 years and they are earning or living on \$15,000 in Social Security, they are going to be asked to pay \$12,500 more

for health care than is currently the case. How do they do that? What kind of health care plan are they going to buy when they are old and sick and are given an \$8,000 voucher? How many days in the hospital will they be able to have? You can run up an \$8,000 bill in 1 day, in 2 days. So this ending of Medicare as we know it, forcing seniors to somehow come up with all kinds of money that in many cases they don't have, will be a disaster for tens of millions of people.

The Republican budget would also force 4 million seniors in this country to pay \$3,500 more on average for their prescription drugs by reopening the Medicare Part D doughnut hole. That goes into effect as soon as that bill would be passed, if it were to be passed.

Under the Republican budget, nearly 2 million children would lose their health insurance over the next 5 years by cuts to the Children's Health Insurance Program according, again, to the Congressional Budget Office. At a time when 50 million Americans have no health insurance, the Republican budget would cut Medicaid by over \$770 billion, causing millions and millions of Americans to lose their health insurance, and it would cut nursing home assistance in half.

Right now, Medicaid pays the lion's share of nursing home care. If we make savage cuts in Medicaid, what happens to the elderly who are in nursing homes and what happens to their children in terms of trying to provide the help their parents desperately need?

The Republican budget would completely repeal the affordable health care act, preventing an estimated 34 million uninsured Americans from getting the health insurance they need.

At a time when the cost of college education is becoming out of reach for so many Americans, the Republican budget would slash college Pell grants by about 60 percent next year alone, reducing the maximum award from \$5,500 to \$2,100.

At a time when over 40 million Americans do not have enough money to feed themselves or their families, the Republican budget would kick some 10 million Americans off of food stamps. What kind of sense of morality is that, that when people today are struggling hard in order to feed themselves, we throw another 10 million people off food stamps?

It is no secret to anyone that our Nation's infrastructure is crumbling. The Republican budget passed in the House and supported by all but a handful of Republicans here in the Senate would slash funding for our roads, bridges, rail lines, transit systems, and airports by nearly 40 percent next year alone. One of two things would happen: Either, as a result of this, our infrastructure continues to deteriorate or else hard-pressed cities and towns are going to have to raise property taxes and other regressive taxes in order to come up with a differential. Yet, despite the fact—we talked about cuts in health

care, Medicare, Medicaid, education, nutrition, environmental protection—yet, despite all of those cuts, when it comes to military spending, which has tripled since 1997, the House Republican budget does nothing to reduce unnecessary defense spending. In fact, defense spending would go up by \$26 billion next year alone under the Republican plan.

Interestingly enough, at a time when the rich are becoming richer, when the effective tax rates for the wealthiest people—at 18 percent—are about the lowest on record, at a time when the top 2 percent have received hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars in tax breaks, at a time when corporate profits are at an alltime high and major corporations making billions of dollars in profits are not paying a nickel in taxes, my Republican colleagues, in their approach toward deficit reduction, do not ask the wealthiest people in this country or the largest corporations to tribute one penny—one penny—toward deficit reduction.

Poverty is increasing. Republicans cut programs for the most vulnerable people in this country. The middle class is disappearing, in need of great help. Republicans cut the safety line from them. The rich, who are getting richer, and large corporations, making huge profits and in many cases not paying anything in taxes at all, their requirement is to receive even more in terms of tax breaks.

Now, that may make sense to some people. It does not make sense to me. In fact, what the Republicans want to do is provide over \$1 trillion in tax cuts to millionaires and billionaires by permanently extending all of the Bush income tax cuts, reducing the estate tax for multimillionaires and billionaires, and lowering the top individual and corporate income tax rates from 35 percent to 25 percent. The rich get richer. They get tax breaks. The poor get poorer. They lose their ability to send their kids to college or to have nutrition programs or health care.

The Republican idea of moving toward a balanced budget is to go after the middle class working families and low-income people, and to make sure millionaires and billionaires and the largest corporations in this country, which are in many cases doing phenomenally well right now, do not have to share in the sacrifices being made by everybody else. They will be protected.

The Republican approach to deficit reduction in Washington is the Robin Hood philosophy in reverse: We take from the poorest people and we give to the richest people. And it is not as if that approach is good for our economy. Mark Zandi, the former economic adviser to JOHN MCCAIN when he was running for President, has estimated that the Republican budget plan will cost 1.7 million jobs by the year 2014, with 900,000 jobs lost next year alone.

The House Republican budget is breathtaking in its degree of cruelty. But do not take my word for it. In a

letter to congressional leaders, after the House GOP plan was introduced, nearly 200 economists and health care experts wrote:

Turning Medicare into a voucher program would undermine essential protections for millions of vulnerable people. It would extinguish the most promising approaches to curb costs and to improve the American medical care system.

Ezra Klein, a columnist at the Washington Post, wrote last April:

The budget Ryan released is not courageous or serious or significant. It's a joke, and a bad one. For one thing, Ryan's savings all come from cuts, and at least two-thirds of them come from programs serving the poor. The wealthy, meanwhile, would see their taxes lowered, and the Defense Department would escape unscathed. It is not courageous to attack the weak while supporting your party's most inane and damaging fiscal orthodoxies. But the problem isn't just that Ryan's budget is morally questionable. It also wouldn't work.

The deficit we are struggling with right now has been caused by unpaid-for wars, tax breaks for the rich, a Medicare Part D prescription drug program written by the insurance companies, the bailout of Wall Street, a declining economy, and less revenue coming into our Treasury. The Republican "solution" is to balance the budget on the backs of the sick, the elderly, the children, and the poor, to cut back on environmental protection, to cut back on transportation, while providing even more tax breaks to those who do not need it. That is unacceptable, and that is what the American people have to stop.

It is not just wealthy individuals who are making out like bandits. As hard as it may be to believe, some of the largest, most profitable corporations in this country are not only avoiding paying any Federal income taxes whatsoever, but they are actually receiving tax rebates from the IRS. The Republican response to this reality is to provide even more tax breaks to these corporate freeloaders. That may make sense to someone. It does not make sense to me.

What I want to do, Mr. President—and I ask unanimous consent to do so—is to have printed in the RECORD a list of a number of corporations that are making huge profits and are paying virtually nothing in taxes and in some cases getting a rebate.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

(1) Exxon Mobil. In 2009, Exxon Mobil made \$19 billion in profits. Not only did Exxon avoid paying any federal income taxes that year, it actually received a \$156 million rebate from the IRS, according to its SEC filings.

(2) Bank of America. Last year, Bank of America received a \$1.9 billion tax refund from the IRS, even though it made \$4.4 billion in profits and just a couple of years ago received a bailout from the Federal Reserve and the Treasury Department of nearly \$1 trillion.

(3) General Electric. Over the past five years, while General Electric made \$26 billion in profits in the United States, it received a \$4.1 billion refund from the IRS.

(4) Chevron. In 2009, Chevron received a \$19 million refund from the IRS after it made \$10 billion in profits.

(5) Boeing. Last year, Boeing, which received a \$30 billion contract from the Pentagon to build 179 airborne tankers, got a \$124 million refund from the IRS.

(6) Valero Energy. Last year, Valero Energy, the 25th largest company in America with \$68 billion in sales last year received a \$157 million tax refund check from the IRS and, over the past three years, it received a \$134 million tax break from the oil and gas manufacturing tax deduction.

(7) Goldman Sachs. In 2008, Goldman Sachs paid only 1.1 percent of its income in taxes even though it earned a profit of \$2.3 billion and received an almost \$800 billion bailout from the Federal Reserve and U.S. Treasury Department.

(8) Citigroup. Last year, Citigroup made more than \$4 billion in profits but paid no federal income taxes, even though it received a \$2.5 trillion bailout from the Federal Reserve and U.S. Treasury.

(9) ConocoPhillips. ConocoPhillips, the fifth largest oil company in the United States, made \$16 billion in profits from 2007 through 2009, but received \$451 million in tax breaks through the oil and gas manufacturing deduction during those years.

(10) Carnival Cruise Lines. Over the past five years, Carnival Cruise Lines made more than \$11 billion in profits, but its federal income tax rate during those years was just 1.1 percent.

Mr. SANDERS. Let me briefly read from this list of corporate freeloaders.

No. 1, ExxonMobil, the largest oil company in the world. In 2009, ExxonMobil made \$19 billion in profits, and not only did ExxonMobil avoid paying any Federal income taxes that year, they actually received a \$156 million rebate from the IRS, according to its SEC filings. Well, do you think maybe we might want to ask ExxonMobil to pay a little in taxes so we do not have to throw children off their health insurance? Maybe.

Bank of America. Last year, Bank of America, the largest bank in America, received a \$1.9 billion tax refund from the IRS even though it made \$4.4 billion in profits and just a couple of years ago received a bailout from the Federal Reserve in the Treasury Department of nearly \$1 trillion. Well, what do you know about that? We are bailing out the largest banks in this country, whose greed caused the recession, and then they get a rebate from the IRS rather than paying any taxes. Yet our Republican friends think the solution to deficit reduction is not to ask Bank of America to pay its fair share but to end Medicare as we know it and force low-income seniors to pay substantially more for their health care.

No. 3, General Electric. Over the past 5 years, while General Electric made \$26 billion in profits in the United States, it received a \$4.1 billion refund from the IRS. I do not know. What do you think? Do you think we should ask GE maybe to help us out just a little bit with deficit reduction?

Chevron, a major oil company, received a \$19 million refund from the IRS after it made \$10 billion in profits.

Last year, Boeing, which received a \$30 billion contract from the Pentagon

to build 179 airborne tankers, got a \$124 million refund from the IRS.

And on and on it goes.

Valero Energy.

Goldman Sachs. In 2008, Goldman Sachs paid only 1.1 percent of its income in taxes even though it earned a profit of \$2.3 billion. Gee, most Americans would be pretty happy to pay 1.1 percent of their income in taxes. But then again, they are not Goldman Sachs.

Citigroup, ConocoPhillips, Carnival Cruise Lines.

On and on and on. You have large, extremely profitable corporations that either pay nothing in taxes or get a rebate from the IRS. Maybe—just maybe—when we talk about deficit reduction, we might want to ask those people to help us out rather than go after the elderly, the sick, the children, and the poor.

Large corporations today are sitting on a recordbreaking \$2 trillion in cash. The problem is not that corporations are taxed too much; the problem is that consumers do not have enough money to buy their products, and the Republican agenda would make that far worse. Corporate tax revenue last year was down by 27 percent compared to 2000 even though corporate profits are up 60 percent over the last decade. These guys make more and more money; their contribution to the Treasury goes down.

When we talk about how we can—in a fair way, in a responsible way—deal with our deficit and our national debt, man, here is one very clear example, as shown in this picture. Here you have, in the Cayman Islands, a building. I think it is a four-story building, and it looks like a normal-size four-story building. Yet it has 18,857 companies that call this building their home. Now, one of two things is going on: Either these guys are very, very crowded—18,000 corporations in this one four-story building; maybe they are very crowded, and we should call in the zoning people in the Cayman Islands to check that out—or maybe something else is going on. Of course, what is going on is this is a total, absolute fraud. This is a building that does not house anybody. It is a phony address that 18,000-plus corporations use for the explicit purpose of not paying taxes to the United States of America.

There are studies out there which suggest that large corporations and wealthy individuals are avoiding \$100 billion in taxes every year by setting up these offshore tax shelters in the Cayman Islands, Bermuda, and the Bahamas. Maybe, maybe, maybe, before we tell young people they cannot go to college or single moms they cannot get childcare for their kids or low-income seniors we are going to cut back on their nutrition, maybe, just maybe, we might want to end this blatant outrage, which costs us \$100 billion every single year.

In 2005, one out of four large corporations paid no income taxes at all even

though they collected \$1.1 trillion in revenue. What about looking there for revenue? Our Republican friends say: Oh, no, no, no. We can't do that. We have to force elderly people to pay more in Medicare, throw kids off Medicaid.

Now, what is a very interesting point—and, frankly, we are all politicians. You do not get elected to the Senate if you do not understand something about politics. What I do not understand—and certainly what President Obama needs to understand—is that the overwhelming majority of the American people do not agree with the Republican approach, which says: Give tax breaks to billionaires and go after the elderly, the sick, the children, and the poor. That is not just BERNIE SANDERS talking. I am not much into polls, to be honest with you, but I think it is important to just try to get a little bit of a reflection of where the American people are coming from.

According to a recent Boston Globe poll—a couple weeks ago, the Boston Globe did a poll in the State of New Hampshire and was mostly interested in the Presidential campaign, how Presidential candidates are doing in New Hampshire, but they asked some other questions. In New Hampshire—I know because they are a neighbor of mine—they are the big antitax State. They are the conservative State in New England. Here is what the folks in New Hampshire said in that recent poll.

Seventy-three percent support raising taxes on people making over \$250,000 a year, 78 percent oppose cutting Medicare, 71 percent oppose cutting Medicaid, and 76 percent oppose cutting Social Security.

The Republican approach is the opposite. They want to cut Medicare, they want to cut Medicaid, they want to cut Social Security, and they certainly do not want to ask the wealthiest people in this country to pay a nickel more in taxes.

That is one poll. Let's look at another poll. In fact, poll after poll has more or less mirrored what New Hampshire voters are saying.

A recent NBC News-Wall Street Journal poll found the following: 81 percent of the American people believe it is totally acceptable or mostly acceptable—that is how they frame these polls—to impose a surtax on millionaires to reduce the deficit. Let me repeat that. Eighty-one percent of the American people—in the Wall Street Journal-NBC poll—think it is totally acceptable or mostly acceptable to impose a surtax on millionaires to reduce the deficit.

Eighty-one percent of the American people think it is a good idea. Yet we cannot get one Republican to ask the wealthy to pay a nickel more in taxes. Talk about being out of touch with what the American people want.

Seventy-four percent—in that same poll—of the American people believe it is totally acceptable or mostly acceptable to eliminate tax credits for the oil and gas industry, and on and on it goes.

Seventy-six percent believe it is totally unacceptable or mostly unacceptable to cut Medicare to significantly reduce the deficit.

Here is an interesting poll that maybe some of my Republican friends want to pay attention to; that is, that while the leaders of the tea party here in Washington are fighting to dismantle Medicare and Medicaid, it turns out that in another poll done by McClatchy, 70 percent of those people who identify themselves with the tea party oppose cutting Medicare and Medicaid to reduce the deficit. That is the tea party.

Here is the last poll I wish to highlight. There are many more out there. It was done by the Washington Post and ABC News. Here is what that poll says. It says 72 percent of Americans support rising taxes on incomes over \$250,000 to reduce the national debt, including 91 percent of Democrats, 68 percent of Independents, and 54 percent of Republicans.

So here you have in Congress, surrounded by lobbyists and powerful special interests, a Congress heavily dominated by large campaign contributors, of Members of the Senate moving in exactly the opposite direction of where the American people want to go. The American people want shared sacrifice. The American people believe that when the wealthiest people in this country are doing phenomenally well and the gap between the rich and everybody else is growing wider, yes, the wealthiest people have to contribute to deficit reduction.

The American people believe we have corporations making recordbreaking profits and not paying a nickel in taxes. Yes, they have to start paying taxes. The American people overwhelmingly believe it is bad for this country to go after Medicare and Medicaid and programs that working families desperately depend upon.

Instead of listening to millionaires and billionaires, it is time for our leaders in Washington to start listening to the overwhelming majority of the American people who do want the wealthiest people in this country and the most profitable corporations to contribute to deficit reduction. It is time for shared sacrifice.

The middle class, the elderly, the sick, the children, and the poor have already sacrificed enough. It is time for those people on top, the people who are doing extremely well, to also understand they are Americans, they are part of our country, and they have to contribute to deficit reduction. The fact is, moving toward deficit reduction in a way that is fair is not as complicated as some would have us believe. In fact, if you are not beholden to Wall Street, large corporations and wealthy campaign contributors and you are not frightened about the number of 30-second ads that may be thrown at you if you take these guys on, it is quite easy.

I know there are many people out there of good faith who have different

ideas about how we can move forward toward a balanced budget, toward deficit reduction. I am not saying I have all the answers. But let me just give you a few examples, a few examples as to how we can reduce the deficit by more than \$4 trillion over the next decade, and that includes, of course, asking the wealthy and large corporations to begin paying their fair share of taxes and does not do undue harm for ordinary Americans.

We can do it. We can do it. If you are concerned about deficit reduction, I am concerned about deficit reduction. But we can do it, calling for shared sacrifice and in a way that does not attack programs that millions and millions of children, elderly, and working families are terribly dependent upon.

Let me just give you a few ideas. I know other people have other good ideas. First, we simply repeal the Bush tax breaks for the top 2 percent. We can raise at least \$700 billion over the next decade. That is it. The rich are getting richer. Bush gave them huge tax breaks. You repeal that, \$700 billion.

I know some of my Republican friends say: Oh, my goodness. If you do not give tax breaks to the very wealthy, it will have a negative impact on jobs. This is the trickle-down economic theory. You give tax breaks to the rich, large corporations, and we create all kinds of great jobs. That idea has been tested. That idea was tested. That was the idea of former President George W. Bush. But during his 8 years as President, when that idea was in effect, the private sector lost—lost—over 600,000 jobs, and we had one of the worst economic decades, in terms of job creation, ever seen in this country. We tried that theory. We did give tax breaks to the rich and large corporations, and we lost 600,000 jobs during that 10-year period.

Meanwhile, when Bill Clinton raised taxes on the top 2 percent, you know what. The world did not quite cave in. In fact, during Clinton's Presidency, we created over 22 million jobs, and he left office with a huge budget surplus. But that is just one argument. You heard polls say we should impose a surtax on millionaires. The vast majority of the American people believe that. If you did a 5.4-percent surtax on millionaires and billionaires, that would raise \$383 billion over 10 years.

You want another idea? At a time when our manufacturing sector is collapsing, when 50,000 factories have shut down in the last 10 years, when millions of workers have lost good-paying jobs, the U.S. Government continues to reward companies that move U.S. manufacturing jobs overseas through loopholes in the Tax Code known as deferral and foreign source income.

That, clearly, from a financial point of view, in terms of revenue to our government, as well as policies which result in the loss of millions of good manufacturing jobs, is not something we should sustain. If we ended that absurdity, that policy alone, the Joint



Tax Committee has estimated we could raise more than \$582 billion in revenue over the next 10 years. So what about that—\$582 billion of revenue and we stop the outsourcing of jobs so maybe we can rebuild our manufacturing sector. Sounds to me like a pretty sensible idea.

My Republican friends think it is a better idea to throw poor children off Medicaid or force elderly people to pay far more than they can afford for Medicare. But ending this absurd policy, which encourages companies to throw American workers out on the street, makes a lot more sense to me than what the Republicans are talking about.

Fourth, if we ended tax breaks and subsidies for big oil and gas companies, we can reduce the deficit by more than \$40 billion over the next 10 years.

Fifth, if we prohibited abusive and illegal offshore tax shelters—what I just talked about a moment ago—we could bring in \$1 trillion over 10 years. That says to the corporations and the wealthy: Sorry, you are no longer going to be able to stash your wealth in the Cayman Islands and avoid paying taxes.

Sixth, if we established a Wall Street speculation fee of less than 1 percent on the sale and purchase of credit default swaps, derivatives, stock options and futures, we could reduce the deficit by more than \$100 billion over the next decade and also—also—tell Wall Street we are not going to tolerate their outrageous behavior which led us into this recession in the first place. We are going to try to get a handle on their speculation.

Seventh, if we tax capital gains and dividends the same way we tax work, ordinary work, we can raise more than \$730 billion over the next decade. Why should somebody who clips dividend coupons pay a substantially lower tax rate than somebody who is out working on our streets or is a nurse or is a teacher? Warren Buffett has often said he pays a lower effective tax rate than his secretary. Today, the effective tax rate of the wealthiest 400 Americans is just 18 percent, the lowest on record.

On and on. We have a number of ideas out there, not the least of which is taking a hard look at the military. There are debates as to how much we can cut, but certainly we should all be in agreement that it no longer makes sense to sustain weapons systems that were built in order to fight the Cold War against the Soviet Union. They are not our enemy right now.

I can tell you that I, my office, requested a GAO report that found that the Pentagon had \$36.9 billion in spare parts it does not need and which are collecting dust in government warehouses. We can do better than that. Frankly, in my view—I think I speak for the majority of the people in my State of Vermont, I suspect, in this country—it is time to begin bringing the troops home from Iraq and Afghanistan at an accelerated rate. We have

been in Afghanistan now for 10 years. It is time for the Afghan people and their military to take responsibility, in terms of defeating the Taliban. We should be supportive of those efforts. But we should bring our troops home a lot sooner than the President has suggested. When we do that, among other things, we are also going to save a substantial sum of money.

Further, I will not deny for one second that there is waste and fraud and bureaucracy in almost every government program out there. I think we have to take a hard look at them all. I believe that in addition to the Pentagon, we can save hundreds of billions of dollars a year by eliminating unnecessary bureaucracy.

The ideas I have enumerated, and some I have not but which will become part of the RECORD, if we did all or some of these things, we could easily reduce the deficit by well over \$4 trillion over the next decade, if not, in fact, much more. It would be done in a way that is fair, and it would not unnecessarily and needlessly ruin the lives of some of the most desperate and fragile and hurting people in our country today, millions of people who are just struggling to make ends meet. Those people would be spared.

The extreme rightwing agenda of more tax breaks for the wealthy, paid by the dismantling of Medicare, Medicaid, education, nutrition, and the environment, may be popular in the country clubs and cocktail parties of the wealthy and the powerful, but it is way out of touch with what the overwhelming majority of Americans want.

As you know, late last week Congressman CANTOR, the Republican majority leader in the House, and Senator JON KYL, the Republican whip, walked out of the budget negotiations being led by Vice President BIDEN. The reason they walked out was pretty clear. They were not willing to close one single loophole in the Tax Code that allows the wealthy and large corporations to avoid paying taxes by stashing their money in the Cayman Islands and all the other loopholes that currently exist.

My sincere hope is that President Obama will use this Republican walk-out, their unwillingness to talk about the wealthy and large corporations contributing anything toward deficit reduction—that he will use this as an opportunity to rally the American people and make it clear he will never support Republican demands to move toward a balanced budget solely on the backs of working families, the elderly, the children, the sick, and the poor. But I don't think the President will do it unless the American people send him a message that enough is enough.

The American people do not support the Republican agenda. The American people support the concept of shared sacrifice as we move toward deficit reduction. But the President has to hear from the American people. He has to hear that they will not accept deci-

ating Medicare, Medicaid, Pell grants, education, and the environment in order to give more tax breaks to the wealthy. The President has to stand up for the millions of Americans who have seen their homes, their jobs, and their savings vanish, instead of the millionaires who have never had it so good.

It is my belief if the American people make that demand of the President and tell the President not to yield on this issue, we can win this budget struggle. If people would like to sign it—and I hope they would—we have a letter to the President, which I will read in a moment, on my Web site, [sanders.senate.gov](http://sanders.senate.gov)—and, also, as I mentioned earlier, they can contact the White House directly by going straight through the White House Web site and sending a message.

If hundreds of thousands of people do that, the President, I hope, will have the strength and determination to say to the Republicans: Sorry, we are not going to balance the budget on the weak and the vulnerable.

This is the letter that is on my Web site, which I hope the people will sign. This is what it says, which encapsulates much of what I have been saying for the last hour:

Dear Mr. President,

This is a pivotal moment in the history of our country. Decisions are being made about the national budget that will impact the lives of virtually every American for decades to come. As we address the issue of deficit reduction, we must not ignore the painful economic reality of today—which is that the wealthiest people in our country and the largest corporations are doing phenomenally well, while the middle class is collapsing and poverty is increasing. In fact, the United States today has, by far, the most unequal distribution of wealth and income of any major country on earth.

Everyone understands that over the long term we have got to reduce the deficit—a deficit that was caused mainly by Wall Street greed, tax breaks for the rich, two wars, and a prescription drug program written by the drug and insurance companies. It is absolutely imperative, however, that as we go forward with deficit reduction, we completely reject the Republican approach that demands savage cuts in desperately needed programs for working families, the elderly, the sick, our children, and the poor, while not asking the wealthiest among us to contribute one penny.

Mr. President, please listen to the overwhelming majority of the American people who believe that deficit reduction must be about shared sacrifice. The wealthiest Americans and the most profitable corporations in this country must pay their fair share. At least 50 percent of any deficit reduction package must come from revenue raised by ending tax breaks for the wealthy and eliminating tax loopholes that benefit large, profitable corporations and Wall Street financial institutions. A sensible deficit reduction package must also include significant cuts to unnecessary and wasteful Pentagon spending.

Please do not yield to outrageous Republican demands that would greatly increase suffering for the weakest and most vulnerable members of our society. Now is the time to stand with tens of millions of Americans who are struggling to survive economically, not with the millionaires and billionaires who have never had it so good.

Respectfully yours.

That letter is at [sanders.senate.gov](http://sanders.senate.gov). I think we have many thousands of signatures on that letter already. I hope we can get more. If people prefer to go to the White House Web site, they can do that. That would be important. The main point is that the President has to know that we will not accept a deficit reduction package that just comes out heavily on working families.

The reason I raise these issues today is that I am, frankly, very worried because we have gone through this negotiating process two times in the last 6 months. That is why we need the American people to weigh in on this issue.

In fact, we have seen this movie before. The Republicans, led by their extreme right wing, have been successful in getting their way because of their refusal to compromise and willingness to hold the credit and economic security of the American people hostage.

As many people will remember, in December the Republican leadership was prepared to hold the middle-class tax cuts and unemployment benefits hostage in order to extend the Bush tax breaks to the top 2 percent. As we all know, the Republicans won. As a result, over \$200 billion was added to the deficit over the next 2 years. Not only did the Bush tax breaks for the wealthy get extended, they also got a reduction in the estate tax which benefits the top three-tenths of 1 percent.

Specifically, the December tax cut agreement extended the Bush income tax rates, and it cost us very substantially.

It is not just the Bush tax cuts that were extended. In March of this year our Republican friends said that unless we made very significant cuts, the Republicans were prepared to shut down the government, disrupt the economy, and deny paychecks to some 800,000 Federal workers—if they could not get their way. They said: We are going to shut down the government unless you make these Draconian cuts.

One of the cuts I was disturbed about—among many—was \$600 million to build new community health centers, which would keep people alive and end up saving money. There are other Draconian cuts, as well. They also cut Pell grants, making it harder for students to go to college. The point is, they acted as bullies and said: If we don't get our way, we are prepared to shut down the government.

Now we are back here again, and this is part 3 of the act. Part 1 was whether the middle class would get its tax breaks and whether unemployment benefits would be extended. The Republicans won. Part 2 is whether the government would be shut down. The Republicans mostly won and got almost everything they wanted.

Here we are, act 3, the biggest act of all; and the question is whether the Republicans will, in fact, not raise the debt ceiling. If they do that, it is quite possible that not only our country but

the entire world might be plunged into a major financial crisis.

This is what they are threatening: If we don't get everything we want, we are prepared not to pay our government's debt for the first time in the history of our country. We are prepared to see interest rates go up in a very fragile global economy. And we are prepared to see more and more instability.

In many ways, the Republicans in Washington are acting like schoolyard bullies. As we know, bullying is a very serious problem in our schools. Every educator worth his or her salt would tell us that when dealing with a bully, we must not give in to their tactics or tolerate their temper tantrums or allow them to hurt innocent people. We have to deal with them sternly and consistently. We cannot allow them to win by dictating the rules of the game and trampling over everybody else if they don't get their way.

We have a serious debt problem that must be solved, but it must be solved in a way that is fair and in a way that calls for shared sacrifice.

Let me conclude by suggesting that the American people are concerned about the deficit. They are also concerned about the economy, and they are also concerned that so many of our people—of all ages, in all parts of this country—are hanging on economically by their fingernails.

The American people understand that it is just not fair at all to come down on people who are already hurting and leave unscathed the wealthiest people in this country and large profitable corporations.

What I say today to the President of the United States is this: Mr. President, stand tall. Do not yield to Republican blackmail. Stand with the vast majority of the American people who believe that deficit reduction requires shared sacrifice—that everybody makes a sacrifice, not just working families, the elderly, the sick, and the poor.

With that, I yield the floor.

#### TRIBUTE TO OPAL OVERBEY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a devoted and hardworking Kentuckian. Ms. Opal Overbey has been honored in her hometown and will have her life story submitted to the Library of Congress for being an extraordinary woman who dedicated her life to her family and her work.

Born December 2, 1929, on Tom Cat Trail in Laurel County, KY, Opal was the fourth of eight children. Growing up, Opal remembers a childhood filled with love, laughter and hard work. Following the guidance of her parents—her mother, a committed housewife and her dad, a diligent farmer—she learned that a little hard work and determination goes a long way. Driven by a desire to be independent and earn her own money, Opal worked two jobs.

After many years at the local laundromat as well as working part time at the Crystal Kitchen, Opal moved into a small room in a house behind a jeweler with her cousins. Soon after, she met her husband of 62 years, Virgil Overbey.

When Opal was 17 she and Virgil got married. Together they had four children. Being a mother at a young age was a difficult feat to master, but Opal was determined to give her children a childhood similar to her own. As they got older, her eldest son Jim found a common interest with his mom, and together they built a greenhouse supplying flowers and crops for the community. After Virgil Overbey's unfortunate death on November 24, 2008, the greenhouse was a way for the family to stay together and enjoy each other's company while doing something they all loved.

Opal's greenhouse business continues today. She says that working at the greenhouse has always been a pleasurable experience, but it's the people and the customers that make it worthwhile: "I think in life you have to just work and treat people right, and be honest and the Lord will bless you." Her children have grown up and started families of their own, and Opal continues to help in any way that she can.

Kentucky is fortunate to have a hardworking and devoted woman like Opal Overbey. At 81 years of age, Opal has lived a lifetime of service to her community. I am sure her children Jim, Denver, Glenda, and Evelyn, as well as her whole family, are very proud of everything that she has accomplished and provided for her loved ones.

Mr. President, the Laurel County Sentinel Echo recently published an article highlighting Ms. Opal Overbey's life and career. I ask unanimous consent that the full article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD as follows:

[FROM THE SENTINEL ECHO, LAUREL COUNTY,  
JUNE 8, 2011]

#### LONDON'S LIVING TREASURES: PART 3

In the third installment of the Living Treasures project, we meet 81-year-old Opal Overbey, a fixture at Overbey's Greenhouse on Ky. 229. The only Living Treasure nominee who is a native of Laurel County, Overbey shared her life story, one that is characterized by love of family, love of the land and a tireless work ethic.

"I was born Dec. 2, 1929 here in Laurel County on Tom Cat Trail near Bush. My mother just raised all us youngin's, she was a housewife, and my dad farmed everything, tobacco, corn, whatever people grew then. He had about 80 acres of pastureland. He was a good, honest man. My mom was the same. There was eight of us, six sisters and two brothers. I was the fourth child down.

I had a happy childhood. Honey, we just played and had fun and worked also. Dad always made us hoe corn and whatever he was doing. He learned us to work. But we would play Hoopy Hide, tag, hopscotch, whatever kids played at that time. We used to take washes down to the creek where the water