

problem and we are going to solve it together; that we are not going to just do another pro forma lifting of the debt ceiling as if it were business as usual. Because business as usual it is not. We don't have a tax problem in this country, we have a spending problem, and we must attack it if we are going to have credibility.

That brings me to a bill I have introduced because I think it is important, as we are looking at this looming deadline, to have a plan B. If, in fact, we are not going to be able to come to an agreement—both Houses of Congress and the President—that would cut the spending levels sufficiently enough that many of us would be comfortable with in order to pass a bill raising the debt limit ceiling—if we don't meet that test—we should have a responsible plan B. This would be a plan that would say: If, in fact, we can't agree on what it will take to lift that debt ceiling, this is how we are going to treat the money that will be coming in. Because at that point our government will be limited in its expenditures by the revenue that is coming in.

We can allocate that revenue, and that is where I think we must have a plan B. We must make sure certain things are done. The No. 1 thing we all know that is going to be paid is the interest on the debt. That is our No. 1 responsibility because that will keep us from going into default, which none of us wants to do. The second thing is to pay our military—the people who are deployed overseas, in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the places that are supportive of those efforts. We must assure we are paying those people on time so their families, who are thousands of miles away in other parts of our country, will know they can pay their rent and are not going to go into extremist positions.

#### MILITARY PAY

I wish to talk about a bill I have introduced that has 80 cosponsors.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to add Senator HELLER of Nevada to be a cosponsor of S. 724.

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

Mrs. HUTCHISON. I thank the Chair.

S. 724 is the Ensuring Pay for Our Military Act of 2011. There are 80 cosponsors of this legislation. It is very simple and straightforward. It ensures that in the event of a government shutdown, our Nation's men and women in uniform would continue to receive their military pay and allowances. That is what it does. This legislation will protect all Active-Duty men and women, including those in the Coast Guard and Reserve components.

I introduced this bill earlier this year because we were in the process of having a meltdown with our appropriations. We need to have a law that assures if there is a shutdown, whether it is on an appropriations issue or on a budget issue or on a debt ceiling issue, we know where the money will go—where the protections will be. I think

our military should be front and center. I also think Social Security recipients should be front and center, but this bill is for the military because they are in harm's way as we speak in many places around the globe and we don't want to disrupt their families or have them worry for 1 minute about their families while they are doing their duty.

These military families have faced stress from repeated deployments since 9/11. The last thing they should worry about is not receiving their paycheck on time because Congress and the President have not been able to do the job they need to do.

Immediately after introducing this bill, I was contacted by a military spouse. Her husband was on his 10th deployment in support of operations in the Middle East. The spouse was at home raising their 1-year-old son. She was very concerned about whether she was going to be able to pay her bills. Multiply that story by many thousands and one can imagine the stress of these families across our Nation who have loved ones in harm's way. This should not be compounded by adding an unnecessary financial stress that is the fault of a Congress unable to pass an appropriations bill or a Congress and President unable to reach an agreement to cut our deficit so the debt ceiling will not have to be raised again.

At a time when our Nation has 100,000 troops in Afghanistan and 45,000 in Iraq, it would be unconscionable to ask our troops to serve on the front lines without ontime pay. From my home State of Texas, there are more than 28,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines currently deployed. This is second only to California in the highest number of deployed troops from one State.

I would like to especially recognize the soldiers from the 36th Infantry Division of the Texas National Guard. They are currently serving in the southern region of Iraq and are doing a great job. These brave Texans are working long hours in the extreme heat, facing a dangerous enemy. But the most remarkable aspect of their service is they all raised their hands to volunteer to do it. The very least we can do is pay them on time. It would be tremendously damaging for morale to tell our troops to go on long deployments, maybe multiple deployments, away from their families, and then not pay them at the normal time.

I know if there is one thing this Congress can agree on, it is our tremendous pride and support for the brave men and women in uniform. I think Congress has shown that time and time again. We all learned a lesson after what happened during the Vietnam war and after the Vietnam war, when the disagreement about the policies of the war were actually imputed to those who were following orders to implement that war. We will never let that happen again. It hasn't happened since, and it will not happen. There is not one

Member of Congress who doesn't respect our military and the service they are giving—even if they disagree with the policies, which many often do. So I wasn't surprised when I introduced this bill to get 80 cosponsors immediately.

It is becoming clear that negotiations on a long-term deficit reduction plan may go down to the wire. The President said yesterday he will insist on tax increases to pay for a continued Federal spending spree. Republicans are clear: We must lower government spending to affordable levels, and there must be fundamental changes in how Washington spends the American taxpayer dollars. Now is the time for Congress to vote to assure that our troops will not miss a paycheck due to gridlock in Washington, not at midnight on August 2 or whenever we are adjourning, hopefully, for a recess so Members can get home and work in their districts.

If the Senate cancels its July 4 holiday recess—which is now on the books—it is time for us to spend that time on nothing else but this issue—long-term deficit reduction. We should start our work by making sure we have a plan B that our troops and their families will not be political pawns in the struggle between raising taxes and cutting spending. If we are here, it should be for one purpose and one purpose only; that is, debt reduction and the preparation for what happens if that deadline passes and there is not an agreement.

I can't think of a better way to say we are preparing for the worst while we are hoping for the best, and that is that we make sure certain essentials are done.

Obviously, interest on the debt is our first obligation. The second one is to pay our military personnel who are overseas, who are deployed, and to make sure they are not worrying about their families at home having the money to pay the mortgage and the bills that must be paid on top.

So I hope the Senate will take up this bill, and I am going to ask that we consider the Ensuring Pay for Our Military Act of 2011 is on the agenda if we are in session next week. That seems to be what is in the works right now. If that is the case, let's do something productive. I can't think of something more productive and more reassuring to our military than to pass S. 724, with 80 cosponsors. If it comes to the floor, it is going to pass. It will go to the House, and I assure you it will pass.

So let's start that process. If we are going to be here next week and a lot of plans are going to be disrupted, we are willing to do that. But let's make it worthwhile by passing significant legislation, such as ensuring that our military is paid on time if for any reason we are looking at a government shutdown.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

THANKING SENATOR HUTCHISON

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, while the Senator from Texas is still on the floor, I just want to say how, personally, this Senator is going to miss her after the calendar year 2012, since she is retiring from the Senate. I say that with the utmost respect and affection for the Senator from Texas because what a great partner she has been in setting policy for this Nation's space program.

Had it not been for the Senator from Texas, we would not have that policy etched into law in the NASA bill that we passed last year and which now is the skeletal structure that we hang all the appropriations on going forward, giving a clear path, a clear direction, a clear roadmap for our Nation's space program. So I just wanted to thank the Senator from Texas in front of the Senate.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I appreciate so much the words of the Senator from Florida because, of course, he is not mentioning the great leadership he has portrayed.

He is today the only Member of the Senate who has actually gone into space as an astronaut, and his love for and zeal for our space exploration is unsurpassed, and I appreciated working with him.

It was our joint bill that passed last year that assures a way forward for NASA; that assures that there will be manned space exploration; that we will use the space station, in which we have invested hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars, for not only health benefits for our country but also learning about dark energy. The dark energy and antimatter research that is being done right now, I witnessed myself last week when I visited the NASA facility at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, TX. We are now getting information on the cosmic rays that are coming into the spectrometer that has just been put on the space station by CDR Mark Kelly and his crew during the most recent shuttle mission, and we are going to possibly learn the genesis of the universe by this facility that was put aboard the space station and the research that is going to be done on dark matter and what happens when it meets matter. It is really exciting, and I believe that the way forward that Senator NELSON and I have put NASA on, I believe, is going to assure that we have private sector involvement; that there will eventually be a transition to the private sector, but in an orderly way so that we don't lose the expertise in which we have invested so much.

I hope later, before I leave, we will get a chance to talk about that. I am looking forward to going to the last launch of the space shuttle that America will put up. The systems that we have had will end after this last space launch that will happen in early July, and then we will be in the process of building the new vehicle which we have put in place in the law to begin to shorten the gap between the time that we can put Americans in space with

our own vehicle. We are going to try to make that a shorter timeframe by the law that we passed.

So, Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Florida and look forward to having more opportunities to talk about the importance of space exploration and America's preeminence in that field.

I yield the floor.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I want to thank the Senator again. We stood shoulder to shoulder and we were able to get these two additional flights, which the Senator from Texas just chronicled, that no sooner had Mark Kelly and his crew put the alpha magnetic spectrometer up on the space station that it started collecting these cosmic rays.

These are subatomic particles that are flying around in space that we try to duplicate down here on Earth by smacking atoms together in accelerators to understand subatomic particles, and we have them out there being collected right now on the space station in the AMS. It was on the station one day after they put it there. It is collecting this. It is going to help us learn all the way back to the origin of the universe.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. If the Senator would yield.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Of course.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. When I was there last week, Dr. Samuel Ting, who is the Nobel laureate from MIT who built the spectrometer and talked about and convinced us of the importance of putting it on the space station, he was there with Mark Kelly and myself, and he said they had 1 billion hits now of those cosmic rays and he was on a cloud, literally, about what they are learning already. Mark Kelly said, in a press conference that we had, that it was the most significant achievement that he has ever made in his entire career as an astronaut. I believe he will be proven right, and I think Dr. Samuel Ting will be eligible for another Nobel Prize in physics if we can really find the genesis of matter and antimatter in space, which he said we would; that you cannot duplicate on Earth except by trying to put these atom smashers and electron smashers on Earth but at much bigger expense than being able to do it in space where it just happens. Billions already, he said.

So thank you. I leave the floor. I know we digress, but it is very exciting.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Well, Mr. President, as the Senator is leaving, I just want to say that she and I did have to stand shoulder to shoulder, and we had some fights. Of course, in the process we had some critics too. Now some of my critics wish that when I went into space it would have been a one-way ticket. But the fact is, it was a two-way, and we stood another day. The proof is in the pudding of what is happening up there.

I will have something later to say, Mr. President, about the winddown of

the space shuttle program. But while the Senator from Texas was here, I just wanted her to know my profound gratitude for her collegiality, her friendship, her expertise, and working in the way this Senate ought to work, which is in a bipartisan way. I thank her profoundly for that example that she set for the Senate and for this country.

Mr. President, we are here about General Petraeus. I am a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee. I have had a chance to visit with him on a number of occasions in his capacity as general, as well as now the nominee, soon to be the new CIA Director.

I would simply say that I don't think for our national security's sake we could have two better nominees now: the former CIA Director, who has been confirmed by this Senate as the new Secretary of Defense, taking over from an extremely good and competent Secretary of Defense, Secretary Gates—and, of course, that is Leon Panetta—and then for his shoes, as the leader of the CIA, to be filled by General Petraeus. And what is happening today is illustrated by the modus operandi of the takedown of bin Laden. It is a marriage between the intelligence community and the military community.

Of course, the takedown of bin Laden was exactly that: painstaking years of effort to get the intelligence, since bin Laden went dark after he slipped through our fingers in Tora Bora, and we knew he was communicating by a courier. So the question was, How did we find the courier? Once we identified who it was, where was he? Find him and follow him. That, of course, led us to the compound, and when married up with all of that intelligence on what was going on at that compound, then in came the U.S. military.

Although it was a CIA operation, as reported by the newspapers, led by Leon Panetta, in fact, it was a three-star admiral, a Navy SEAL, who conducted the actual raid from his headquarters. Of course, the SEALs took care of business and did it in such a proficient, effective, and magnificent way, and sequestered all of those women and children, save for the one woman, as reported in the newspaper, who got caught in the crossfire when the SEALs were fired at.

So it was an absolutely 100 percent operation, and it is illustrative of why this appointment of General Petraeus is so important and why the appointment of Leon Panetta as Secretary of Defense was so important. These two are going to be just like that, as we are protecting the national security for years to come.

That is what I want to say about General Petraeus.

Mr. President, I would like to speak on another subject—the budget—so I ask consent that I speak as in morning business.

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

THE BUDGET

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, the negotiation over this deficit