

who still says: My way or the highway. Every other leader has said they are willing to make certain concessions—even though they do not like them—to avoid default.

The Nation, and, of course, this Congress is waiting for Leader CANTOR to step to the plate in a similar way so that maybe we can come to a compromise that actually avoids default and, at the same time, gets a handle on the debt and deficit problems and reduces both of those.

Madam President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Madam President, I know we have a vote that is coming up momentarily, but I just wanted to say my wish for those folks who are huddling up down at the White House every day: Don't miss this opportunity for a grand bargain to do something serious about deficit reduction. That is why I am concerned about Senator MCCONNELL's proposal because it would take us off that practice.

When they look at that real opportunity for \$4 trillion of deficit reduction, they ought to look at the proposal of the Senate Budget Committee—\$4 trillion, \$2 trillion of which over 10 years comes out of the \$14 trillion of the tax expenditures—or tax preferences that special interests have. We would only have to take from 9 to 17 percent of all that \$14 trillion of tax preferences in order to produce the \$2 trillion of revenue over 10 years.

I have just put that issue to a panel of experts in a joint Ways and Means-Finance Committee meeting as to what they would recommend, and I will talk about that later today.

With that, I yield the floor.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that all time be yielded back.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the motion to invoke cloture.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on S. 1323, a bill to express the sense of the Senate on shared sacrifice in resolving the budget deficit.

Harry Reid, Richard J. Durbin, Patty Murray, Daniel K. Inouye, Christopher A. Coons, Sheldon Whitehouse, Barbara Boxer, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Bernard Sanders, Frank R. Lautenberg, Sherrod Brown, Jack Reed, Dianne Feinstein, Jeff Merkley, Benjamin L. Cardin, Carl Levin, Charles E. Schumer.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on S. 1323, a bill to express the sense of the Senate on shared sacrifice in resolving the budget deficit, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 49, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 108 Leg.]

YEAS—51

Akaka	Gillibrand	Mikulski
Baucus	Hagan	Murray
Begich	Harkin	Nelson (FL)
Bennet	Inouye	Reed
Bingaman	Johnson (SD)	Reid
Blumenthal	Kerry	Rockefeller
Boxer	Klobuchar	Sanders
Brown (OH)	Kohl	Schumer
Cantwell	Landrieu	Shaheen
Cardin	Lautenberg	Stabenow
Carper	Leahy	Tester
Casey	Levin	Udall (CO)
Conrad	Lieberman	Udall (NM)
Coons	Manchin	Warner
Durbin	McCaskill	Webb
Feinstein	Menendez	Whitehouse
Franken	Merkley	Wyden

NAYS—49

Alexander	Graham	Murkowski
Ayotte	Grassley	Nelson (NE)
Barrasso	Hatch	Paul
Blunt	Heller	Portman
Boozman	Hoeven	Pryor
Brown (MA)	Hutchison	Risch
Burr	Inhofe	Roberts
Chambliss	Isakson	Rubio
Coats	Johanns	Sessions
Coburn	Johnson (WI)	Shelby
Cochran	Kirk	Snowe
Collins	Kyl	Thune
Corker	Lee	Toomey
Cornyn	Lugar	Vitter
Crapo	McCain	Wicker
DeMint	McConnell	
Enzi	Moran	

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. On this vote, the yeas are 51, the nays are 49. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2012—MOTION TO PROCEED

CLOTURE MOTION

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state. The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 91, H.R. 2055, an act making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2012, and for other purposes.

Harry Reid, Richard J. Durbin, Patty Murray, Daniel K. Inouye, Christopher

A. Coons, Sheldon Whitehouse, Barbara Boxer, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Tim Johnson, Frank R. Lautenberg, Sherrod Brown, Jack Reed, Dianne Feinstein, Jeff Merkley, Benjamin L. Cardin, Mark L. Pryor, Carl Levin, Charles E. Schumer.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to H.R. 2055, an act making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2012, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 89, nays 11, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 109 Leg.]

YEAS—89

Akaka	Franken	Merkley
Alexander	Gillibrand	Mikulski
Ayotte	Graham	Moran
Barrasso	Hagan	Murkowski
Baucus	Harkin	Murray
Begich	Hatch	Nelson (NE)
Bennet	Heller	Nelson (FL)
Bingaman	Hoeven	Portman
Blumenthal	Hutchison	Pryor
Blunt	Inhofe	Reed
Boozman	Inouye	Reid
Boxer	Isakson	Risch
Brown (MA)	Johanns	Roberts
Brown (OH)	Johnson (SD)	Rockefeller
Burr	Kerry	Sanders
Cantwell	Kirk	Schumer
Cardin	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Carper	Kohl	Shelby
Casey	Kyl	Snowe
Chambliss	Landrieu	Stabenow
Coats	Lautenberg	Tester
Coburn	Leahy	Thune
Cochran	Levin	Udall (CO)
Collins	Lieberman	Udall (NM)
Conrad	Lugar	Warner
Coons	Manchin	Webb
Crapo	McCain	Whitehouse
Durbin	McCaskill	Wicker
Enzi	McConnell	Wyden
Feinstein	Menendez	

NAYS—11

Corker	Johnson (WI)	Sessions
Cornyn	Lee	Toomey
DeMint	Paul	Vitter
Grassley	Rubio	

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. On this vote, the yeas are 89, the nays are 11. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I would hope following the Republicans' luncheon they will allow us to move to this bill. Senator JOHNSON and staff are ready to move forward on this legislation. We would hope after the luncheon they would allow us to be on it. So it would be open for amendment. There are lots of spots open for people to offer amendments. This would be our first appropriations bill. I think it would be, especially in that we are working on these budgets, deficit-reduction programs right now here and at the White House, a good message to everybody

that we can do an appropriations bill and stay within our legislative framework as far as spending.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I also ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for—well, it will not be 20 minutes but let me ask for up to 20 minutes.

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

STATE OF THE OCEAN

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, nothing is more important in the short term than resolving our debt limit impasse, and I would urge my colleagues to take Social Security out of their gun sights. It has not contributed to our debt or deficits.

I would urge my colleagues to focus not on Medicare benefit cuts but, rather, on health care system reforms that will save not only Medicare and Medicaid costs but private health care and health insurance costs as well—cost savings throughout the system. I would urge my colleagues to yield a bit on defunding every tax loophole, every tax gimmick and tax preference as if they were tax hikes. They are not. They are just not. They are earmarks in the Tax Code. They are special benefits in which ordinary Americans usually do not share, and we should not put the special interests first, ahead of ordinary Americans who did not get special tax deals.

But as important as all of that is in the short term, there are some things that are more important in the long term than our debt limit, and I rise to speak about one.

In April of this year a group of scientific experts came together to discuss an issue with consequences that will influence the planet and our American society for generations to come. They met at the University of Oxford to discuss the current state, and eventual fate, of our oceans. “The ocean,” as stated in the workshop’s summary report, “is the largest ecosystem on Earth, supports us and maintains our world in a habitable condition.”

For 3 days, 27 scientists representing 18 prominent research and conservation organizations worldwide, reviewed the latest findings on ocean stressors—and in particular the consequences of multiple, combined stressors—for marine life and for the human population. The scientists found that stressors in combination magnify the negative effect of each one occurring alone.

Based on this determination, the scientists at this meeting concluded:

We have underestimated the overall risks and that the whole of marine degradation is

greater than the sum of its parts, and that degradation is now happening at a faster rate than predicted.

In short, things for the ocean are worse than we thought and getting worse faster than expected.

All too often, we take for granted the fact that our oceans feed us, support our coastal communities, and drive our tourism economies. Unfortunately, these ocean ecosystems are severely stressed, from nutrient pollution, chemical dumping, overfishing, marine debris, invasions of exotic species, warming waters and, perhaps most alarming, a drop in ocean pH to levels not seen for more than 8,000 centuries: acidification of our oceans. Individually, these stressors would be cause for concern. In combination with each other, this expert group of scientists concluded, they are driving our ocean toward the brink of a mass extinction and ecosystem collapse.

One example of the multiplier effect on marine life comes from plastic debris and toxic chemicals. Plastics make their way as trash into the ocean where they break down into small particles that are consumed by marine life, like sea turtles, sea birds, and microscopic plankton. Consumption of plastic alone becomes fatal for marine life, when they consume so much indigestible material that they stop eating all together and starve to death. But the surfaces of plastic particles also easily absorb chemical pollutants, so they amplify the load of chemical pollution on these creatures.

The levels of chemical pollution are themselves on the rise in even the most remote seas where no human development exists. Many of these chemical pollutants, like flame retardants and fluorinated compounds are poured down home sinks, or expelled as waste from industrial facilities, directly into the ocean. Plants and animals have not evolved ways to break down these new synthetic compounds, so they “bioaccumulate,” meaning they become increasingly concentrated as they are passed up the food chain, or passed in marine mammals from mothers to calves in their milk, until many of our top oceanic predators, our most majestic creatures, are now swimming toxic waste.

Another example of what the scientists call “negatively synergistic” environmental harms is the combination of destructive fishing practices, nutrient runoff, and the presence of hormone-disrupting pharmaceuticals in our wastewater on coral reefs. But now, these precious ecosystems, known as the rainforests of the sea, do not have to just contend with overfishing, nutrient, and wastewater pollution. Now the reefs, like the mangroves, salt marsh estuaries, and seagrass meadows, in their damaged and less resilient state, must also face a rapidly changing climate and its dual effects of ocean warming and acidification. Coral reefs are more likely to bleach when exposed to both increased temperature

and acidification than if they are exposed to either condition separately.

Add both conditions to pre-existing stressors, and 35 percent of the world’s reefs are classified as in a critical or threatened stage. Scientific projections indicate that without urgent action, coral reef ecosystems could be eliminated in 30–50 years.

The death and decline of coral reefs, the most diverse ecosystems on the planet, dramatically impairs the reproduction and development of hundreds of other species that call them home. When a reef ecosystem collapses and does not recover, it quickly becomes dominated by algae, and the phenomenal biodiversity once present disappears. For human society, this is accompanied by a loss of food, loss of income, and damage to the billion-dollar per year tourist industries.

The workshop report echoes the overwhelming body of peer-reviewed science and literature on climate change and carbon pollution, stating that:

Human actions have resulted in warming and acidification of the oceans and are now causing increased hypoxia (lack of oxygen). Studies of the Earth’s past indicate that these are the three symptoms . . . associated with each of the previous five mass extinctions on Earth.

We are now talking about changes whose precedents can only be found in geologic time. I have often said how we have veered outside of the bandwidth of carbon concentration that has prevailed for 800,000 years. This comparison is to mass ocean extinction events 55 and 251 million years ago. Back then, the rates of carbon entering the atmosphere in the lead-up to these extinctions are estimated to be 2.2 and 1.2 gigatons of carbon per year, respectively, over several thousand years. But, as this new report identifies, “Both these estimates are dwarfed in comparison to today’s emissions of roughly 30 Gt of CO₂ per year.” Such a massive dumping of carbon pollution into our atmosphere creates the prospect of devastating damage to our oceans.

And, in fact, we may already be witnessing this devastation. In one breathtaking part of the report, the scientists remark that, “The speeds of many negative changes to the ocean are near to or are tracking the worst-case scenarios from the IPCC and other predictions.” The IPCC, or Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, created several scenarios predicting how the Earth’s natural systems could respond to ever-increasing amounts of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. This report says observations are worse than the IPCC’s worst case scenarios. The predictions of the IPCC have received a lot of special-interest-sponsored mockery on this floor, but these are not predictions now, they are observations. For instance, the decrease in Arctic Sea ice cover and the melting of the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets, which hold enough water to

raise sea levels by more than 200 ft, are actually occurring, and faster than expected. Correspondingly, sea levels are rising.

Likewise, the report observes that “acidification is occurring faster than in the past 55 million years, and with the added man-made stressors of over-fishing and pollution undermining ocean resilience.”

These observations should be sobering. Not only are the changes great, but they are happening so quickly that marine life cannot adapt.

Numerically, the average ocean pH has decreased from 8.2 to 8.1 since the industrialized revolution. This seems like a small change, but the pH scale is logarithmic, so the change is profound. If that same amount of change in pH occurred in our blood, we could suffer respiratory or kidney failure. It is not difficult to imagine how this change has huge consequences for marine life and especially the calcifying organisms, like coral reefs, shellfish, and plankton, which are increasingly becoming soluble in their environment as it becomes increasingly acidic. If this unprecedented rate of change in ocean pH continues it could mean an almost 200 percent decrease by mid century. It is not an exaggeration to say that we are on the verge of an ecosystem collapse that we could see happen in a single generation.

Though mass extinction events have occurred in the past, workshop participants state that, “comparing the current environmental change with these events is difficult because the rates of environmental change are unprecedented. It is therefore difficult to predict what the outcome of the current anthropogenic experiment will be.” However, the report continues: “it can be said that we are pushing the Earth system to its limits.”

The workshop participants concluded, “Unless action is taken now, the consequences of our activities are at a high risk of causing, through the combined effects of climate change, overexploitation, pollution and habitat loss, the next globally significant extinction event in the ocean.” Again, they mean in geologic time.

So what will we do? This is not the first report to state with certainty that our oceans, and thus our ocean dependent populations and economies, are in serious jeopardy. In 2003 the Pew Ocean Commission report led off with the following, “America’s oceans are in crisis and the stakes could not be higher.” In 2004, the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, as mandated by Congress in the Oceans Act of 2000, published their final report and pronounced, “The importance of our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes cannot be overstated; they are critical to the very existence and wellbeing of the nation and its people. Yet, as the 21st century dawns, it is clear that these invaluable and life-sustaining assets are vulnerable to the activities of humans.”

Nearly two centuries ago, the poet Byron could write:

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean—roll.
Ten-thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
Stops with the shore.

Well, no more. Now, in 2011, this international group of scientists reminds us that we are now marking the oceans with ruin and that “the human interactions with the ocean must change,” to quote their report, “to sustainable management of all activities that impinge marine ecosystems.”

Mr. President, we must work together to preserve and protect the ocean ecosystems we rely on so heavily, for we too are greater than the sum of our parts. In a bipartisan effort, Senator SNOWE and I have introduced the National Endowment for the Oceans to provide dedicated funding for ocean and coastal research, restoration, protection, and conservation. Too often, the knowledge and the information we need to better protect and understand these ecosystems comes too late or comes not at all. We hope to change that.

Together, we can still turn the tide to protect our ocean and our society, but if we are to have any chance, we must act soon, and we must make progress quickly. I look forward to working with my colleagues to confront these looming challenges.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I am in somewhat of a unique position as a returning Senator after being out of Congress for 12 years. I never contemplated running for the Senate again or being back on this floor in any capacity except as a former Senator, but I had a chance to do it over, I guess is the best phrase, and assess what is important and why I am here.

I ran for only one reason. I am deeply concerned about the direction of our country and our plunge into debt. I want to try and avoid coming here and assessing blame, but rather set aside who is responsible. I want us to avoid the politics of all this and simply recognize this is the situation we face. Our fiscal situation has potentially dire consequences for the future of this country, not just for our children and grandchildren, but even for this generation.

Our economy is not in good shape. We still have not recovered from one of the deepest recessions since the Great Depression. There are a lot of people out of work. The official unemployment number is 9.2 percent. The real number is a lot higher than that because many people have given up looking for work, or they extended their

time in school because they know that if they graduate and get out into the job market they are not going to be able to find work in the area they are trained for, or perhaps in any area. A lot of people have tried and tried and simply cannot find work.

It is clear and I think there is a consensus—if not total consensus at least pretty close to total consensus—that we simply have run out of money. As a government we have made promises that we can no longer afford to pay for and fulfill, without serious financial restructuring. We have enjoyed a lot of largess and a lot of prosperity in the past. As a result, commitments were made for spending in discretionary programs, building highways, and sewer systems, etc.—a lot of good things but things we simply no longer can afford.

We see this happening across the world. There has been a 60-year spurt or commitment to credit and now the money has run out to pay for all that. Whether it is southern Europe, other parts of the world or the United States, this is a very difficult situation. For the last 6 or 7 months a lot of us have worked very hard to try to find a solution. We are now in the month of July, and we are approaching the date in which we reach our debt limit. We no longer can continue to borrow without raising that limit.

About 40 percent of everything we spend now has to be borrowed. That is unsustainable. We are told that funding for the basic programs that help the senior citizens of our country enjoy the rest of their lives—Medicare and Social Security—are drying up, and it will not be long before either benefits have to be cut or programs become insolvent. No one here wants to see that happen. What we do want to see happen, though, are necessary steps to preserve those programs for the future.

This crisis is occurring all over the world. We are watching it take place as it creeps through different countries, and now we are facing that. Whether it is a liberal economist or conservative economist or someone in between, or someone with no political interest, there is consensus that we have to take action and we need to take it now. We cannot postpone it. We have been doing this for years.

We all knew the baby boomers would retire and put tremendous pressure on our budget, and that is exactly what has happened. The quicker we take action, the less painful it will be. It is going to be painful because we have put fixing this problem off for so long.

For 6 or 7 months there has been a sincere effort by a lot of people to solve this problem—Republicans and Democrats. These are people who genuinely have concern for the future of this country and believe we need to address these issues, as painful as they are. It goes against political instincts of preparing and positioning oneself for reelection, whether it is 2012 or beyond.

But as I said from the beginning, we must find a way to transcend politics

and the 2012 election. Unfortunately, the closer we get to the crisis, the more we see politicians positioning themselves so as not to be blamed.

The reason we came here was not to position ourselves politically so we can succeed in the next election. The reason we came was to deal with the problem in front of us right now and that needs to be addressed right now. What is the rough consensus? The rough consensus is that if we don't have at least, over the next 10 years, \$4 trillion to \$6 trillion of cuts in discretionary spending and in some of the mandatory programs, we are not going to have a credible program the financial world will be able to look at and say: You can still trust in the value of the dollar and ability to continue viewing America as a safe haven to place investments.

There is a consensus that unless we make structural changes—not just cuts and nicks and little slices here and there, but structural changes—in the entitlement programs, they will not be solvent in the years ahead. Then we will have to turn to those senior citizens and beneficiaries and low-income people and say: I am sorry. We simply cannot pay you what we had committed to pay you. Your benefits are going to have to be reduced, or we are going to have to raise taxes to pay for it.

Without comprehensive tax reform, we are not going to have the kind of package we need to create a dynamic, growing economy that can solve some of our revenue problems. It is not just cutting, it is not just growth, but it is a combination of those items and structural reform that is necessary in a package, and that is what we have been debating: how to get there.

What is disturbing to me lately is that we have shifted away from that central focus, and now we are focusing on who will take the blame when we default or don't default on August 2. There is a lot of political posturing around here. This is not about corporate jets. It is not about all these ads out there and mailings and so forth saying: Congress is going to take away your Social Security. Congress is going to slash your Medicare benefits.

I guess I am asking that we acknowledge the reality of the situation we are in, that we do our very best to put this above the politics of 2012, and work to find some sensible solution to all of this.

I believe comprehensive tax reform can potentially provide a way to address the need for revenue and the need for growth. As we know, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of special expenditures, exemptions, subsidies, credits in the Tax Code that were put in for the few and not for the many, that have complicated our Tax Code to the point where no one can understand it except for someone with an advanced degree in accounting or law.

So I believe tax reform is essential as a part of whatever reform package we finally come up with to address the

debt. Senator WYDEN and I, on a bipartisan basis—a Democrat from Oregon, a Republican from Indiana—have put together a comprehensive tax reform package. We don't call it perfect. We are open to suggestions. But it eliminates those special exemptions and uses the revenues gained from cutting loopholes to lower tax rates for Americans. Our corporations pay the highest corporate tax rate of every one of our global competitors except one. There are 36 countries that compete and sell their products around the world, and we are 35 out of 36 when it comes to our tax rate. We want to level playing field with the rest of them because we think we can outcompete, and that will be a significant and positive impact on our economy. So using those revenues from eliminating loopholes as a way of lowering tax rates and addressing some of the needs we have is certainly something we ought to be exploring.

Lastly, let me just say we need to focus on the reality of the situation in a personal way because we get caught up in numbers, and we get caught up in generalities. What are we trying to do? We are trying to get this economy moving again so people who have been searching for work for 2 and 3 years can get their jobs back; so young couples who wish to raise a family have the opportunity to buy a home; so parents who are saving and trying to get their children into good schools for postsecondary education have the ability to do that; so college graduates can come out of school with a degree and find a place to work and begin a career.

We owe it to the people of our country who are suffering right now, and there are many. We owe it to this Nation that has provided so much opportunity and so much prosperity for so many people. No country in the world has come close to what America has achieved. We owe it to our children and our grandchildren who will inherit what we have done or not done. The reality is, we are going to transfer a debt load onto our children and future generations that they may not be able to overcome. I don't want to leave that legacy. I don't want to be part of a generation that does that. So I think it is time for us to stand up and do what is necessary to address this problem.

Letters and emails from Indiana are running 100 to 1 in favor of cutting government, and running 100 to 1 against cutting anything in Social Security or Medicare. I have people coming into my office every day saying: We know we have to get our fiscal house in order, but let me tell you why our program needs to be exempted.

As politicians, we want to say yes to people. As responsible, elected officials faced with a very difficult situation, we have to, with compassion, look at people and say: No, we are not able to do this. We are not able to afford this, but we are taking this action today so we can afford it in the future. We are taking action now so we can leave future generations with the same types of op-

portunities our generation has enjoyed and the benefits that come from living in America. That may cost some people their elections. There are a number of people here who are willing to sacrifice for that purpose.

Do we want to leave and say: Well, I survived all these years unscathed politically, or do we want to leave here saying at the right time we did the right thing? At the time of crisis, at a time when our country desperately needed us to come together to address this very serious problem that could plunge our country into a deep recession, if not depression, at a time when financial institutions around the world are fragile, at a time when wars and conflicts are popping up all over the globe, did we do the right thing? What do we want our legacy to be regardless of the consequences?

We are 2 or 3 weeks away from defaulting on our debt. There are a lot of excuses around here about that and some even think it will not have many consequences. It will. The idea of using that as leverage to gain what we need to do doesn't appear to have worked.

I think if we keep our focus simply on default or not default, we still have a major problem. Just simply finding a way to get through this and raising the debt limit does not solve the underlying problem. That has to be addressed. I wish we had been able to do that because the situation is dire. We cannot wait until 2013. We need to do it now.

So here I am. I don't have answers. I have some guidelines from people who know a lot more about this than I do, people who do not have a political stake in this in terms of what they think we need to do to put together a package. We need a plan that has credibility with the financial world, so that what has happened in Greece, Portugal and Ireland and maybe now in Italy or Spain, and other places in the world will not happen here because we have restored some confidence and faith in the American people and the investment see the United States as a safe haven for their money. We need credibility so others know we have seen the problem, we have recognized it, we have taken meaningful steps, and while it will be painful and take time—America has come through.

To paraphrase Winston Churchill: America always will do the right thing after it has tried all the wrong things. Well, we spent a lot of years doing the wrong things and not recognizing that we were building up an unsustainable fiscal situation that would come back to haunt us. We have tried a lot of methods and postponements and deferments and everything else. What we have not done is stand up to the problem we have and do what is necessary, take this above politics, and do what is right for America.

Mr. COATS. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MERKLEY). The Senator from Alaska.

CROATIA

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, I rise to speak briefly about progress in the nation of Croatia, which I was honored to visit recently.

At the invitation of the Croatian Minister of Defense, I participated in what is known as the "Croatian Summit," a gathering of leaders from Eastern Europe.

The theme of this year's summit was: "A New Decade for Southeast Europe: Finalizing the Transition."

Less than 15 years after a terrible ethnic war that devastated Croatia, the nation is making enormous progress. It is rapidly making a transition to a market-based economy and its government leaders are committed to a strong and lasting partnership with the United States.

They are a great partner of ours in Afghanistan and in other trouble spots across the globe.

That is personally important to me because 100 years ago this year, my grandfather emigrated from Croatia to this country. John Begic—then it was spelled B-E-G-I-C—then 17 years old, left his farm and eventually settled in northern Minnesota's Iron Range.

John Begic and his young bride, Anna Martinich had four children. Their youngest, Nicholas, made his way to America's new frontier of Alaska even before we were a state. He was my father.

Nick Begich was an educator and eventually was elected Alaska's lone Member of the U.S. House of Representatives in 1970. I am honored to follow in his footsteps as a Member of the Senate, where I am the only Member of Croatian decent.

My recent visit to Dubrovnik was my first to Croatia. I was honored to represent this body at the summit, along with officials from the State Department and U.S. Embassy.

I was impressed with the great progress underway there, as well as the excellent job being performed by our embassy personnel. There are enormous opportunities for partnership between the United States and Croatia, and I am anxious to pursue those.

I ask unanimous consent that my remarks at the Croatia Summit be printed in the RECORD to document my participation in the summit and the strong partnership between our nations.

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

CROATIA SUMMIT PANEL: SECURITY CHALLENGES IN THE ALTERED MEDITERRANEAN

Thank you, Defense Minister Božinović, for that kind introduction.

Thanks to all the government leaders of Croatia and to the people of Croatia for the warm hospitality you have extended to me in the short time I've been here. It's also an honor to meet with many of the other leaders of the region at this Summit.

Visiting Croatia has been a life-long dream of mine, never realized until yesterday. It was exactly 100 years ago that a 17-year-old farmer by the name of John Begic left the

family farm in the small village of Podlapaca, over the mountains from the Adriatic not far from Zagreb.

Upon landing at Ellis Island, they gave him a new name—Begich—with an H. And permission to establish himself in America. John Begic was my grandfather. He eventually settled in Minnesota's Iron Range.

John Begic and his young bride, Anna Martinich, had four children. Their youngest—Nicholas—made his way to America's new frontier of Alaska even before we were a state. He was my father.

Nick Begich was an educator and eventually was elected Alaska's lone member of the United States House of Representatives in 1970. I'm honored to follow in his footsteps as a member of the United States Senate, where I am the only member of Croatian decent.

From the moment of my election nearly three years ago, the people of Croatia have treated me as a long-lost son. In fact, I've had better coverage in the Croatian press than my hometown newspapers back in Alaska!

When I was invited to participate in this Croatia Summit, I jumped at the opportunity. Not because I'm an expert in the issues of this region, but more to commend the people of Croatia for your enormous progress and your great partnership with my country.

Croatia has made remarkable political progress since the end of the war more than 15 years ago. You are a welcome member of NATO and will soon become the 28th member of the European Union. Both of these landmarks came with enormous challenge, and I salute your achievement. There will be bumps in the road to this new future.

And there is no doubt that Croatia has earned membership in both. As a NATO member, Croatia has stepped up to the responsibility of providing security in both the region and internationally.

As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I am closely tuned to military engagements across the globe. By the end of this year, nearly 10,000 soldiers from my own state of Alaska will be serving in harm's way in Afghanistan. This is one of the highest percentages of any state. Their service on the front lines is not without controversy back home, and I know you face the same questions here. So I thank you for your partnership.

Croatia's troop commitment in Afghanistan—330, soon to be 350—is one of the highest per-capita contributions in the International Security and Assistance Force there. And Croatia has taken the lead in establishing a military police training center in Afghanistan, to which other members in the region will also contribute trainers.

This cooperation alone, in faraway Afghanistan, involving countries that not long ago were embroiled in a vicious war, brings a certain stability to the region of the former Yugoslavia and creates a unique opportunity.

Fifteen years ago Croatia was a security consumer, with UN Peacekeeping troops deployed throughout the country. It is now a security provider, with 472 troops deployed across the globe, including in Kosovo, the Golan Heights, Afghanistan, Western Sahara, India-Pakistan, and in counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. They even have staff officers assigned to NATO operations in Libya.

One impressive observation: Croatia recently hosted the U.S.-led "Immediate Response" military exercise involving troops from countries throughout the region. Most importantly, Serbian troops participated.

Imagine, just more than 15 years since Serb and Croat troops fought it out throughout this country, Serbian and Croatian

troops cooperated side by side in an exercise to ensure security in the region. This is a testament to the determination of the governments of Serbia and Croatia to put the past behind them. This type of cooperation ensures that this region will have a secure and prosperous future.

Croatia has also demonstrated a desire to play a constructive role in assisting neighboring Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia's stability and prosperity are absolutely key to security in the region.

Croatia is in a position to play a positive and leading role in assisting countries in the region in their efforts at Euro-Atlantic integration. Joining the EU and NATO, with their shared values of democracy, human rights and rule of law, is perhaps the best way to ensure security and prosperity in the region.

In early May, I was honored to welcome to my office Croatian President Josipovic. I congratulated him then on the enormous progress Croatia has achieved in a little more than a decade after a devastating war.

I understand that per capita income is the second highest in the former Yugoslav states. Health, education and other quality of life factors are on par with many European countries. Despite these signs of progress, the president reminded me that Croatia's economy remains troubled, with high unemployment and outdated industries. That's a situation we can certainly sympathize with in my country.

One note of caution: Croatia still has a long way to go to reform its overly bureaucratized economy in a way that will ensure prosperity ensures stability and encourages investment.

Croatia, like many of its European neighbors, is in a position to play a positive role in providing security in a Mediterranean that is in transition. I noted earlier that Croatia has provided staff officers as members of the NATO team conducting operations in Libya. Croatia has also stated publicly that it is working with the anti-Ghadafi Transitional National Council, and has recognized it as the legitimate voice of the Libyan people.

Just as the countries of East and Central Europe had their own European Spring in 1989 and after, North Africa and the Middle East is groping toward a kind of democracy and social justice that for the most part had eluded them. The nations of Europe, especially those like Croatia who made the transition from dictatorship to democracy, can and are playing a special role to help all the people of the Mediterranean achieve democracy, rule of law and prosperity. Euro-Atlantic engagement with the pro-Democracy movements in North Africa and the Middle East is the best way to ensure their revolutions do not take a turn down the wrong path.

The U.S. is anxious to assist with economic partnerships with this region. One specific area is with increased tourism.

From what little I've been able to see of Dubrovnik, you have an enormously attractive city which many Americans would love to visit. And we'd certainly welcome Croatian visitors to our states, including Alaska. I am working with Senator Mikulski of Maryland on her visa waiver bill to ease the ability of Croatians to get visas to visit the United States.

Let me conclude by restating how excited I am to be here in Croatia and to commend you for a productive and lasting partnership with the United States. I hope this conference creates many more opportunities for cooperation within this region.

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, I wish to say thank you for the opportunity to

put on the RECORD my experiences in Croatia this last weekend and, again, seeing the country after 15 years ago going through incredible devastation to where they are today.

I yield the floor, and I note the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

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

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

BUDGET LISTENING TOUR

Mrs. HAGAN. Mr. President, I rise today to report to the Senate on the completion of my North Carolina Budget Listening Tour. While people in this town were mired in political gamesmanship that seems to be pushing parties further apart, I wanted to hear directly from community leaders and business leaders in North Carolina about how they think we should be approaching the responsibility we have to reduce our deficit and our debt. I held listening sessions all over the State—from Raleigh to Greensboro and Charlotte to Wilmington—and I heard from North Carolinians of every kind: small business owners, health care workers, veterans, entrepreneurs, and more.

The message I heard could not have been more different from the partisan bickering in Washington that is dominating the airwaves. In Washington, we see negotiators walking away from the table, refusing any and all compromise, putting politics ahead of what is best for the American people. In North Carolina, people were coming to the table and putting party aside for commonsense solutions to meet our shared budget obligations. To me, the message was crystal clear: Washington needs to take a lesson from North Carolina. It is far past time to put partisanship aside and do what is right for the American people.

At the Charlotte listening session, I heard from the executive director of a health care nonprofit responsible for caring for the elderly. She told me about important ways we can reduce health care costs and save lives, such as expanding access to preventive care for seniors to reduce the onset of expensive chronic diseases. Gayla Woody, the director of aging at the Centralina Council of Governments, told me the story of how one of her clients—a man caring for his wife with Alzheimer's—was able to continue to care for her at their home thanks to the comparatively small investments made in the Family Caregiver Program rather than a more expensive nursing home. They both also told me we cannot afford an extreme plan to turn Medicare into a voucher program for vulnerable seniors. Balancing the budget on their backs is not a solution I can support.

I also heard from small business owners, economic development coordina-

tors, and community bankers at our Wilmington and Raleigh tour stops. They told me about how Washington's partisan paralysis is preventing them from having the sort of certainty they need to be able to make the hard decisions to invest in their businesses and to grow jobs in this economy for their companies. If these businesses don't know whether they ought to be investing in new equipment or new employees, then we are not going to be able to sustain the economic growth that is a necessary component to reducing our deficit and our debt.

I also heard from a veteran of the U.S. Marines Corps and current chaplain for the Onslow County Special Incident Response Team. This dedicated public servant talked about the importance of protecting services for our veterans. And I will fight for them just as hard as they fought for us. He also talked to me about the importance of priorities. He said we ought to keep our promises to those who sacrificed for us—our seniors and our veterans—but we also need to invest in our children and their education. It was important for the future, he believed, and I agree he was right.

While the challenge of reducing our deficit may appear daunting, I don't believe meeting it is impossible if Washington takes to heart the message I heard all over North Carolina last month. Both sides—Democrats and Republicans—need to put aside partisanship and come to an agreement that is bipartisan and balanced, one that includes a shared sacrifice but also fulfills the sacred promises made to our seniors and our veterans and makes the critical investments necessary for a prosperous American future. Above all else, they do not want us to kick the can down the road one more time. They sent us here to make hard decisions. Putting them off to resolve during some future crisis is simply not an option.

These broad goals and values are widely shared across party lines. I recognize turning them into a bipartisan, balanced solution to our fiscal challenges will not be easy, but the consequences of failing to do so are simply too great to ignore.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

THE DEBT

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today as a Member of the Senate—specifically, though, as a Senator from Wyoming because in Wyoming our families know they have to live within their means. Wyoming is a State that lives within its means. In Wyoming, our very constitution re-

quires that our State live within its means.

Washington has a total debt now that is over \$14 trillion and continues to climb every day. Wyoming's total debt is zero. How did Washington fail where Wyoming succeeded? Well, in Washington, this city overspends in Washington there is nothing really to stop it. In Wyoming, we live within our means because our constitution demands that we balance our budget every year. It is time for Washington to take a lesson from Wyoming and the other States that balance their budgets every year.

The President says, "All of us agree that we should use this opportunity to do something meaningful on debt and deficits." Well, passing a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution is possibly the most meaningful thing we could do.

This city's finances are in disarray. Our Nation's finances are in disarray. It has been over 800 days since this body has passed a budget resolution. Since the last time a full budget was passed, our country has spent over \$7 trillion, and \$3.2 trillion of that was money we did not have.

Our total debt now is over \$14 trillion. People say: How much money is that? The number is astonishingly large. Let's try to put it a little bit into perspective. Every day, Washington borrows over \$4 billion. We borrowed over \$4 billion yesterday, \$4 billion today, and if someone will lend us the money, we will borrow over \$4 billion tomorrow. That is over \$2 million a minute, every minute. Every single day, Washington borrows enough money to buy tens of thousands of new homes. Every single hour, Washington borrows enough to buy nearly 2 million barrels of oil. Every single minute, Washington borrows enough to send 53 students to private college for a full year. Every single second, Washington borrows enough to buy two new automobiles. We paid over \$200 billion last year in interest on the debt alone. The President talks about a tax on private jets. That is enough money—the interest alone—to buy over 200 private jets every day.

It is not enough to think about this in the large terms; you have to try to put it in terms that people understand. Because we are spending and borrowing so much money, it is difficult to put it into terms that people grasp and that they see. It is good to hear the President acknowledge that we have to stop making more than the minimum payments in order to pay off and deal with this incredible debt.

The President has also announced his willingness to make a deal that he says involves meaningful changes to Medicare, to Social Security, and to Medicaid. To his credit, the President has accepted that much of the problem with saving these programs springs from his own side of the aisle. He says, and I agree, that now is the time to do it.

The Associated Press quoted the President asking the most important question of all: "If not now, when?" Well, the clock is ticking. In just 13 years, Medicare will be bankrupt. We have to strengthen Medicare. In 25 years, the same will be true of Social Security. Unlike our debt limit, this is not a limit Congress can simply legislate away. We have to act now to prevent these programs from failing not just today's generation but future generations.

The Senate minority leader said: I commend the President for putting Social Security and Medicare on the table.

He is correct in doing that. So with the President seeing the light on so many issues, why are we still talking about finding a solution instead of actually getting one passed here in the Congress? Because, for all that he claims to understand, the President has still fallen back on the same tax-and-spend policies that made this economic situation worse. It is clear that the policies of this administration have taken a tough problem and may have made it worse. On the President's inauguration day, the unemployment rate in this country was just under 8 percent. Today, it is 9.2 percent. Every American child who is born today will owe roughly \$45,000. Let's compare that to the day President Obama was inaugurated. Every child then owed roughly \$35,000. So in just those short years, the debt on a child born in America, the debt they are born with has gone up from \$35,000 to \$45,000. These disturbing economic results are the direct result of the past 2 years of policies.

Liberals want to hold the U.S. credit rating hostage for more tax hikes, and the President is leading the charge. He is trying to push more tax hikes despite the very fact that even he has now said it is the worst time to raise taxes. Back in 2009, President Obama said: The last thing you want to do is raise taxes during a recession. So why, then, is he calling for \$400 billion in tax increases today? And why is the Senate Budget Committee chairman trying to one-up the President by calling for \$2 trillion? Well, of course, the President will not admit he wants to raise taxes. He likes to use wiggle words. He uses words such as "revenue" or the "spending in the Tax Code" instead. But when you translate this Washington doublespeak, it comes out "higher taxes."

With the spin exposed, liberals are trying another tack: They are trying to claim they will delay the tax increases until the economy recovers. They are not saying they are not going to raise taxes; they say: Let's put it off for a while. This week, the President showed what this really means. He said, "Nobody is going to raise taxes right now." He said, "We are talking about potentially 2013 and the out-years." So, in other words, this is not really about waiting until the economic recovery comes; it is about wait-

ing until 2013, until after the President's reelection campaign.

More troubling still, the President has already signaled that he wants to spend more in the future. Our problem is not that we are taxed too little, it is that we spend too much. Yet the President wants to spend even more. At his press conference, he said he is only tackling our debt so we can be "in a position to make the kind of investments I think are going to be necessary to win the future." When the President talks about investment, it is common knowledge that what he is talking about is spending.

Finally, for all his posturing about getting this done, now it is really the President who seems to want to kick the can down the road. His plan may cut trillions, but Washington would be able to take as long as 10 years to do it.

Minority Leader MCCONNELL has already blown the liberal cover on these very cynical political bluffs. He said, "The President has presented us with three choices: smoke and mirrors, tax hikes, or default." Well, Republicans choose none of the above.

As a doctor, I have taken the Hippocratic Oath. The oath says: Do no harm.

Raising taxes will harm our economy. Cutting spending at a snail's pace will do very little to help. We have to tackle our fiscal problems today. The first step toward solving these problems should be to pass an amendment to our Constitution requiring Washington to balance its budget.

A balanced budget amendment would require Washington to spend no more money than it takes in every year. Such an amendment would force Washington to live within its means as many States do and as families across the country do.

I come to the floor as cosponsor of the balanced budget amendment. As a matter of fact, every Republican in the Senate is a cosponsor of the balanced budget amendment, 47 Republican Senators. Every one is a cosponsor of the balanced budget amendment. We are united and will remain united. This is a commonsense approach, and it will show the American people that they can trust their government with their money once again because right now the American people have little confidence they are getting value for the money they send to Washington.

I believe we need to lead today, not defer leadership until tomorrow. Americans are courageous; they deserve a courageous government. That is why I know the American people overwhelmingly support a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution.

The President said the other day that it is time to "eat our peas." We all saw him on television saying it is time to "eat our peas." I agree with another President, Ronald Reagan, who said it is time to "starve the beast." The beast is Washington and the Washington wasteful spending that the American people are seeing every day.

Mr. President, Americans pay their debts. They want their country to do so too. It is time for Washington to listen. It is time for a balanced budget constitutional amendment, and then it is time to start paying off this massive debt.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HAGAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, like you, I have heard a lot of loose talk over the past months invoking the Founding Fathers—loose talk to underscore an expedient argument about what they would be doing if they were legislating today. But the way our Founders are often used is as a caricature to distort history for the benefit of partisan and narrow interests.

To hear some people talk about it, you would think the Founders were engaged in a process of dismantling a country rather than building one. That version of events is not only wrong but it also thoroughly diminishes the founding generation's extraordinary accomplishments and the lessons we should draw from them.

Our Founders met enormous challenges with great courage and sacrifice to start a country around an ideal. In the same vein, our modern history has been characterized by meeting great challenges with distinct qualities. We are hard working. We meet our challenges by refusing to allow their complexities or attendant political difficulty to lead us toward accepting failure as an option. We are inclusive. We meet our great challenges by meeting them as one, by crafting solutions that involve buy-in, participation, and sacrifice from all parts of the political landscape, and the American people.

We act with courage. We meet our great challenges when, and only when, the leaders of the day have the courage to decide they will be the ones who meet those challenges, that they will transcend the short-term incentives and political imperatives of their time to do something of greater importance.

These traits have enabled us to end a Civil War, overcome the Great Depression, and march toward civil rights. But they have also allowed us to do smaller and still very important things such as work together in the 1980s to protect and preserve Social Security.

Today, that honorable past and the sacrifice it entailed has been hijacked to protect and defend narrow interest group politics and tax loopholes.

Our tax and regulatory codes are backward, facing in a way that is straining our recession-battered middle class and failing to drive innovation in our economy. As a result, middle-class

income continues to fall, the gap between rich and poor grows wider, and all of us wait for a 20th-century economy to produce 21st-century jobs. That wait will be in vain.

It will particularly be in vain for those of our citizens unlucky enough to be born poor and who therefore stand a 9 in 100 chance of ever graduating from college in the United States of America in the year 2011. That is because year after year we have torn each other up so much on issue after issue, because of the smallness we have exhibited in the face of what our big challenges are, and now we find ourselves at a crisis point without a politics capable of even addressing the kinds of challenges we face each year, let alone a generational crisis like our deficit and debt.

I have come to the floor for months arguing for the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing our deficits and debt. What Colorado wants is nothing more than what this country has seen from past generations of leaders in past times of crisis. As I have said over and over, what people in red parts of the State and what people in blue parts of the State want is a solution that materially addresses the problem. They know we are not going to fix it overnight, but they want it materially addressed. They want a demonstration that we are all in it together, that everybody has something to contribute to solving the problem. They emphatically want it to be bipartisan because they don't believe in an either-party-going-it-alone approach when it comes to our debt and our deficit.

I add a corollary to that, which is that we need to assure our capital markets that the paper they bought is actually worth what they paid for it.

It was in the spirit of getting together on a solution like that my colleague, Senator MIKE JOHANNIS, and I wrote a letter to the President. Sixty-four Members of the Senate—evenly divided between both parties—signed onto an approach that called for entitlement reform, tax reform, and discretionary spending cuts. The math compels this answer. The economy needs this certainty. Colorado and the country want this result. It should achieve the \$4.5 trillion in deficit reduction over 10 years and should have a 3-to-1 ratio of spending cuts to revenue increases. That is what the Bowles-Simpson Commission recommended.

Our political system seems intent on thwarting an approach supported by Senators in both parties. Both parties seem willing to submit to that flawed system's perverse incentives.

While I am convinced that many in this body and the House would actually like to make this deal, these interests distort the conversation into a partisan war and rip it apart from the inside.

On one side, some advocate for no changes to the Medicare Program; on the other, for no changes to revenue. Yet these are among the two biggest drivers of our long-term debt—and everybody knows it.

Only in Washington could people pretend that significant deficit reduction could be accomplished while ignoring the two biggest fiscal challenges we face. I am a former school superintendent, and what that tells me is that Washington has a severe math problem. We are in need of remediation.

When it comes to a solution on the debt, the contrast between Washington's dysfunction and Colorado's common sense could not be clearer. Yesterday, I had a call with Colorado business leaders who spanned the ideological spectrum—both Democrats and Republicans—to talk about our deficit and debt. Despite their differing party affiliations, there was clearly a consensus that everything needed to be on the table when it comes to the debt—including both tax revenue and entitlement changes. But somehow this common sense gets lost in the current debate.

If changes to entitlements are off the table, we as leaders will fail. If changes in revenue are off the table, we as leaders will fail.

I turn to the American people watching this debate with worry or disgust and say: If challenges to our ideological beliefs or to the politics that historically define our debate are off the table, then as a generation we cannot meet the challenges we face, and we are not going to be able to support the aspirations we have for our kids and our grandkids.

This is about courage: courage on the part of Democrats who know refusing to touch Medicare is an argument we could win, but the price of winning that argument may be losing America's ability to pay its bills; courage on the part of Republicans who know revenues are unpopular but who secretly understand that we can't simply cut our way out of this budget hole. And in a moment of such crisis, this should be the least Americans can expect of us.

During the worst recession since the Great Depression, Madam President, it was my privilege to spend the last 2½ years traveling my State while we were going through this horrible economic turmoil. Americans and Coloradans have made gut-wrenching decisions in their personal lives—about where to send their children to school, how and where to live, what medicines they can afford, and what medicines they might hope to live without. Local officials have been held accountable to citizens for the decisions they have had to make. Yet Congress has struggled to reflect the ideals and aspirations of the people we represent.

This DC political culture serves special interests but it doesn't even register the needs of Coloradans. No business would sacrifice the economic interests of its shareholders, because the ones that do are gone. No mayors in Colorado would threaten their bond rating for political ideology—not one. It wouldn't occur to one of them to threaten their credit rating, because

mothers, fathers, taxpayers, and everyday citizens would have their heads, and rightfully so. I think the difference is that no special interest stands between a Colorado local government official and the people he or she represents.

Having served in local government, I have to say what often seems to be an unattainable standard for a high officeholder is simply life in the real world for the rest of us. Last week, we came to Washington to cast a series of inconsequential votes. But by the end of the week, some of us were encouraged by the talk coming from the President and the Speaker.

My friend JOHN MCCAIN came to the floor pushing the need for a breakout strategy, referenced a Wall Street Journal editorial that called for a far more comprehensive and far-reaching plan. But now we learn a comprehensive deal feels once again out of reach. We are told we will have to settle for something small that one more time kicks the can down the road; that taxes and entitlements are just too hard for Washington politics.

I may not have spent enough time here to see through these political games. This may all be part of an elaborate strategy to get to yes. But I shudder—I shudder—when I wonder what investors, our creditors, and the American people think of this political game of chicken. Unlike Congress, they do not conduct their business with winks and nods, and they solve their problems before they become insurmountable.

All of which brings me back to our Founders and the political leadership of other generations past that made these enormous and difficult decisions. As for us, we have chosen to put them off time after time, and now we are at an inflection point where we need to get this done. We have a \$1.5 trillion deficit and almost \$15 trillion in debt. Revenue is at a 60-year low and spending is at over a 60-year high. And we have the path to begin to bridge this. The Simpson-Bowles commission has given us that path forward.

I am the first to say—and I should say—this debt is something we all own. I voted for things that contributed to it, as have all of my colleagues, and of all the things that comprise the debt, there is something each member of our great Nation wants or needs. We all share in the responsibility for how we arrived at this point.

So to be clear, if anybody thinks this is merely an attack on the institution, we need to understand this massive debt is something for which we are all responsible. Those who voted to fight the wars and to pass the tax cuts did so as a reflection of what they believed was a moment of truth. These decisions were not made in a vacuum. We got here because we aspire to be a society that is better than our competitors. We are all responsible. We are all responsible for the crisis that looms. But the inflection point we have reached has

led to a different mandate, a different moment of truth. The American people are asking us to lead.

This is a country of patriots, of incredibly courageous people who take on challenges little and big every day. I have tremendous respect for my colleagues and for this institution, and I am well aware that until about 6 months ago I had never even been elected dogcatcher. So I recognize how much I have to learn. But clearly—clearly—we are not living up to the standard of courage that past generations of leaders and every generation of ordinary Americans have set for us. Congress is certainly not living up to the standard the people of Colorado and of this country expect from us.

I wonder if maybe we have looked at this the wrong way. The President has put entitlement cuts on the table, and that is the right thing to do. I encourage him to do more.

As for the question of revenue, I will tell any politician that this is not the time to be wedded to the status quo. There is nothing magical about current revenue levels, about our Tax Code, or about all the loopholes and special interest perks that we account for only by borrowing more and more money.

But there is something else important to mention, which is also lost in the debate. We have waged two long and costly wars. I don't want to re-litigate today the wisdom of going to war. My colleagues in the Senate and House—many of whom are still here in the Congress—had to cast difficult votes to send our young men and women into harm's way. But regardless of your position for or against, Congress ultimately made a decision to layer those costs on top of our current budget. We did this instead of accounting for them as part of our annual expenses. That was the decision that Congress made, and it began our slide from surplus to deficit.

So for a moment let us separate the costs of these wars from the important and robust debate we are having about entitlement spending—Medicare, Social Security, and our discretionary programs—and resolve a threshold question, or maybe two: Are we, as a generation, going to pay for these wars or are we going to continue to borrow from foreign governments and stick our kids with the bill? Are we even willing to make just a down payment on their incremental costs? Because that is what we are talking about.

The amount outlined by the Debt and Deficit Commission—\$785 billion in tax reform—which, by the way, would lead to lower rates, doesn't even cover the incremental expense of the war commitments we have made. But it would be a good start. Are we willing to walk away from this moment and say we put the burden of fighting and dying in these wars on our sons and daughters, and at the same time leave the burden of paying it to our grandchildren?

And, after all, are we really willing to threaten the full faith and credit of

the United States by failing to raise the debt ceiling for debts we already owe? This is not like cutting up your credit card. This is like getting your mortgage this month and saying, I'm not going to pay it because I spent my money somewhere else. Are we really willing to do that by failing to act comprehensively against our debt at a moment of global fragility in the capital markets? Would we risk all of this just for politics?

Interestingly enough, in their wisdom, the Founders understood and anticipated this very problem. They had a spirited debate about whether the Federal Government should have what they called "a general power of taxation" or whether we should have a system of "internal and external taxation"—a system where the States could impose taxes but the Federal Government would be limited to collecting its revenue through duties on imports.

Ultimately, the Founders resolved the question in favor of the general power of taxation for the exact reasons that are staring us in the face today. So rather than talk about the Founders, I actually want to read what they said on this subject, in the hopes it will give us some guidance. Let me quote from Federalist No. 30. I apologize for the length, Madam President, but, as always, their words impoverish our own.

If the opinions of those who contend for the distinction [between internal and external taxation] were to be received as evidence of truth, one would be led to conclude that there was some known point in the economy of national affairs at which it would be safe to stop and say: Thus far the ends of public happiness will be promoted by supplying the wants of government, and all beyond this is unworthy of our care or anxiety.

They went on to say:

Let us attend to what would be the effects of this situation in the very first war in which we should happen to be engaged. We will presume, for argument's sake, that the revenue arising from the impost duties answers the purposes of a provision for the public debt and of a peace establishment for the Union. Thus circumstanced, a war breaks out. What would be the probable conduct of the government in such an emergency? Taught by experience that proper dependence could not be placed on the success of requisitions, unable by its own authority to lay hold of fresh resources, and urged by considerations of national danger, would it not be driven to the expedient of diverting the funds already appropriated from their proper objects to the defense of the state? It is not easy to see how a step of this kind could be avoided; and if it should be taken, it is evident that it would prove the destruction of public credit at the very moment it was becoming essential to the public safety. To imagine that such a credit crisis might be dispensed with, would be the extreme of infatuation. In the modern system of war, nations the most wealthy are obliged to have recourse to large loans. A country so little opulent as ours must feel this necessity in a much stronger degree. But who would lend to a government that prefaced its overtures for borrowing by an act which demonstrated that no reliance could be placed on the steadiness of its measures for paying? The

loans it might be able to procure would be as limited in their extent as burdensome in their conditions. They would be made upon the same principles that usurers commonly lend to bankrupt and fraudulent debtors, with a sparing hand and enormous premiums.

I am going to paraphrase that in a minute. But it is almost as though Alexander Hamilton, who wrote these words in 1787, were sitting here today. And from the bottom of my heart, I wish he were. He closed the Federalist Paper No. 30 with an admonition to ideologues, writing that:

. . . [s]uch men must behold the actual situation of their country with painful solicitude, and deprecate the evils which ambition or revenge might, with too much facility, inflict upon it.

As we have at other times in our history, we experienced the kind of evils that Hamilton anticipated on 9/11. We responded. And now, at this extraordinary time, it is left for us to get our house in order.

In truth, these are small decisions, when we consider them in the context of what our Founders faced. Their greatness is measured by the large task they took on and conquered. Ours is merely a junction between our own institutional impulse toward fecklessness and our individual love for our country and for our kids. When faced with similar decisions, families cut back; they sacrifice. And now we must do the same. Now, to paraphrase Hamilton, the last thing we need to do now is act in a way that jacks up our interest rates.

The 100 of us who are here in the Senate didn't create the system in which we operate. None of us decided it would be fun to have special interest groups scoring our every move or lobbyists hounding us about this or that tiny little provision or television channels reducing everything we do and say to a story line of endless minute conflict. And look, I understand what the incentives are here. It is possible we could fail and get away with blaming somebody else. It is possible cutting off our nose to spite our face could be a smart political move in this insane system. But there is a reason we venerate the Founders and Lincoln and the great legislative and executive figures of the last century. They were great not only because of what history threw at them, but because of the way they threw themselves at history.

They raised their hands. They showed real courage not only when they had to but when they didn't. They made themselves of use.

The Founders were practical people—dare I say it, Madam President, practical politicians searching for an ideal that became the United States of America, and they created in their practicality what Lincoln called the last, best hope of Earth. Think of that. Think of our actual history, not a cartoon, and imagine that we stumble, not because the Founders in their time failed to form a union but because in our time we failed to act as one.

Madam President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

THE BUDGET

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I think it is fair to say we have two really major problems we are grappling with here in this Congress. More importantly, the people all across our country are grappling with them.

First, there is an economy that is far too weak. It is growing far too slowly, if at all, and it is certainly producing far too few jobs. The latest data is particularly discouraging on the job-creation front. Until we turn this around and get strong growth, we are not going to produce nearly the number of jobs we need.

The second big problem that strikes me as very disturbing is the unsustainable level of Federal spending and corresponding deficits and debt that have mounted as a result of all that spending. Federal spending since the year 2000, from 2000 to 2010, has doubled from just a couple of years ago when spending was less than 20 percent of our total economic output. Today, it is nearly 25 percent of our total economy, and that is way too large and unsustainable.

All this spending has predictably led to huge deficits. We have been running annual deficits these last couple of years of nearly 10 percent of our entire economy—really staggering in size, \$1.5 trillion for the last couple of years running. The deficits are covered by issuing debt, so we have been accumulating debt at this really breakneck pace.

Of course, all of this debt has caused us to crash into our debt limit, and we are now mired in this debate, in this discussion, in these ongoing, very difficult negotiations over what to do because we have reached the statutory ceiling of the amount of money the Federal Government is permitted by law to borrow—\$14.3 trillion. That is a number which is very difficult to grasp because of its sheer enormity, but there we are. We are at the limit, and we have to decide what we are going to do about it.

I am not impressed with where the current negotiations seem to be and where they have been. I think we have yet to see a plan from the President that lays out exactly what he is willing to cut in spending to put us on a sustainable path.

The President proposed a budget. I sit on the Budget Committee. We looked at that budget, we had testimony about that budget, and what we learned was it is not a serious budget. It would continue with huge deficits

and mounting debt. It did not address any of the fundamental problems. When that budget was on the Senate floor for a vote, the President's budget got zero votes. The President subsequently backed away from his own budget but has not proposed an alternative. Unfortunately, my colleagues in this Chamber on the other side have proposed no budget whatsoever.

So here we are, the world's largest enterprise, the U.S. Government, preparing to spend this year—as we did last year—something on the order of \$3.7 trillion without so much as a blueprint for how we are going to spend that, rules that would govern how it gets allocated in different categories, guidelines for where the revenue is going to come from, how big the deficit will be—none of that. We are simply proceeding along without a budget. I have to say I think that is shockingly irresponsible. Now we go into these discussions about the debt limit. Frankly, it is not clear to me that we are any closer to a resolution today than we were several weeks ago.

Some of us have suggested a solution. We have suggested a way out of this impasse that I would like to describe today. The solution we are proposing is that we go ahead and raise the debt limit by the amount the President has asked. Many of us are not particularly enthusiastic about that, but we acknowledge that failure to do so will at some point in, presumably, early August result in a considerable disruption and a partial government shutdown. It will not result in a default on our debt, and there are many of our ongoing expenses we could continue to cover from ongoing tax revenue, but it would nevertheless be very disruptive, and it is my hope that we never get there and instead find a resolution.

The resolution some of us are proposing—specifically Senator MIKE LEE from Utah, whom I credit a great deal for his leadership—Senator LEE and I have introduced a bill, together with a number of other colleagues—I think we have over 25 cosponsors in the Senate—based on the idea we call cut, cap, and balance. We would agree to raise the debt limit by \$2.4 trillion, as the President has requested, provided that we get ourselves on a path to a balanced budget. By that, we see three pieces: cuts in immediate spending; statutory caps in spending over the next few years; and a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution, which we acknowledge would take several years to achieve. But the point is that the combined effect of these measures would clearly put us on a path to a balanced budget, end the practice of running deficits, and eventually end the need to raise debt limits because we would not be issuing new debt. We would, instead, as a government be living within our means.

If you ask me, this is very reasonable, to suggest that the Federal Government ought to live within its means. It is reasonable for families.

Families do not have any choice; they live within their means. Businesses have to live within their means or they do not survive. And 49 of the 50 States have a requirement that they balance their budgets every year, and they find a way to do it.

This President would not be the first Democratic President to embrace this if he were to embrace this idea. President Clinton, working with a Republican-controlled Congress in the 1990s, first embraced the idea that we ought to strive for a balanced budget, that it was a worthwhile goal, that it was an achievable goal, and within a few years, in fact, they achieved it, two different parties working together—not always enjoying each other's company as much as one might like, but the fact is they got it done. I think we ought to consider using that model today.

As recently as 2007, we were actually quite close to a balanced budget. Our deficit was just over 1 percent of our total economy, as opposed to today, where it is nearly 10 percent of our total economy. I fully acknowledge that we cannot get there overnight, as much as many of us would like to. We have dug a deep hole. We are borrowing almost 40 cents of every dollar we spend. It would be too sudden and Draconian to think we could balance the budget overnight. So we suggested a path that might take 8 or 9 or 10 years to actually reach a balance, but it would surely put us on a path that would get us there, and that would be enormously constructive, not only in the sense that it would ensure the long-term fiscal viability of our country, which is in and of itself an absolutely vital goal, but it would also create some certainty in the market, reduce the risk of huge inflation and huge interest rates and the other dangers that accompany the irresponsibly large deficits, and in the process help to encourage stronger economic growth and job creation.

I think we ought to be flexible in how we get there. We have proposed one way. It is not the only way to do it, but it, importantly, is premised on this principle that we can reach a balance and we ought to do that. It is absolutely critical that we demonstrate that we have the political will and the ability to tackle this, arguably the biggest challenge we face.

We have seen what has been unfolding in Europe because they chose not to tackle these problems in recent years. I suggest we are not that far behind some of the countries in Europe that are in the middle of truly devastating sovereign debt crises. We are not quite there yet, but if we do not change the path we are on, that is the direction we are heading.

Let me walk through the particular items in this approach we are advocating in which we would cut, cap, and balance.

First is to cut spending. We are suggesting a cut from the 2011 levels of \$142 billion. That is actually less than

4 percent of the amount of money the government spent last year—we are still in the current year, but the fiscal year of 2011. It would still spend more than we spent in 2010, so it is very hard to see how this could fairly be described as any kind of Draconian cut. It is a very modest cut in spending. By 2012, the levels will be almost $\frac{1}{2}$ trillion more than the levels of spending in 2008. But that is the first step, to cut spending in the immediate future, in this next fiscal year.

The second is to cap spending over the next several years. To do this, we have established a set of caps, statutory limits on how much the government can spend each year based on the level of spending in the budget resolution I introduced on the Senate floor, which had almost all the Republicans' support. I wish we had some Democratic support, and I still hope we will get some. But the important thing about this budget resolution and these cap levels is they reach a balance—not overnight; it takes 9 years. But by controlling spending and adopting progrowth policies that encourage an expanding economy, we would, following these cap levels, be able to balance our budget. Then, finally, we are advocating that as part of this package, as part of an arrangement, we would agree to raise the debt ceiling. We would also pass in both the House and Senate a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution and send it off to the States.

We would not suggest the increase in the debt limit be contingent upon State option, but I am confident the States would, in fact, pass a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution if we in Congress would send it to them. It would have three big features and, again, the details ought to be a subject of discussion. One that would not be open for negotiation would be that the first outlays need to equal revenues. That is obviously the fundamental definition of a balance. We don't run deficits; we make sure we spend no more than we take in.

The second aspect some of us feel strongly about, and I am one of them, is we ought to limit spending as a percentage of our economy so the economy doesn't keep growing, which is what happens when the government occupies too large a segment of our economy.

Finally, we have advocated that we not create a mechanism that simply guarantees big tax increases in order to balance the budget, and to do that we would like—and we have included—a supermajority requirement to raise taxes so that a simple majority wouldn't be enough. It would require a supermajority which would only occur, presumably, in truly extraordinary circumstances.

I believe very strongly we can have strong economic growth and the job creation we need, but to get there we have to create an environment in Washington; we have to pass legisla-

tion and create an environment that encourages risk taking, encourages business formation, encourages new hiring, and we have not been doing such a good job. One of the ways to do that is to put us on a sustainable, viable fiscal path, and the cut, cap, and balance approach would do that.

We would raise the debt limit by the full amount that the President has asked for provided he agree with us to put this country on a path to a balanced budget. I do not think that is asking too much. I think that is a way to achieve long-term fiscal sustainability, and just as importantly it is a way to create an environment for the strong economic growth and job creation we need.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I request unanimous consent to speak up to 20 minutes.

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

(The remarks of Mr. NELSON of Florida pertaining to the introduction of S. 1364 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

CORPORAL BRANDON M. KIRTON

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, it is with great sadness that I report the passing of a brave soldier, loving son, dedicated husband, and proud father from Centennial, CO. CPL Brandon M. Kirton died on May 18, 2011, in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, of injuries sustained when his dismounted patrol received small arms and mortar fire. This is one of the most strategically important areas of Afghanistan. He was 25 years old.

Family and friends remember Corporal Kirton as a warm, lighthearted young man. Robert Kirton, his father, said that his son's cheerful disposition at home provided a great contrast to the solemn commitment with which he faced his duties as a soldier. This makes perfect sense, Robert said, because Corporal Kirton had dreamed of putting on an Army uniform from an early age.

Corporal Kirton attended Englewood High School in Englewood, CO, where he was a member of the baseball and soccer teams. He enlisted in the Army shortly after his graduation in 2004, and he was assigned to C Company, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, based at Fort Campbell, KY. Corporal Kirton served a

tour of duty in Iraq and one in Afghanistan—both with distinction.

His record as a soldier demonstrates the Army's proudest traditions of valor, commitment to duty, and strength of character. Corporal Kirton was carrying 70 pounds of gear when CPT Gary Flowers, his commander, first met him in Afghanistan in 115-degree heat. Captain Flowers offered to shoulder a bag for him, an offer which Corporal Kirton declined. He simply replied, "Are you kidding me?"

Corporal Kirton's commanding officers immediately recognized his exceptional bravery and talent. He earned, among other decorations, the Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal, and the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal.

Mark Twain once said, "The fear of death follows from the fear of life. A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time." Corporal Kirton's service was in keeping with this sentiment by selflessly putting country first, he lived life to the fullest. He lived with a sense of the highest honorable purpose.

Mr. President, I stand with Colorado and people nationwide in profound gratitude for Corporal Kirton's tremendous sacrifice. He followed through on his dream of becoming a soldier in the U.S. Army and served honorably in Iraq and Afghanistan when his country needed him most. We are forever humbled by and indebted to the memory of his courageous actions. I ask my colleagues to join in me extending our deepest respects and condolences to Corporal Kirton's family.

THE GOLDEN EAGLE AWARD

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize two of Wyoming's best ski areas—Grand Targhee and the Jackson Hole Mountain Resort—for their hard work and commitment to better management practices. Their records of improving efficiency, reducing energy use, promoting better environmental management, and focusing on sustainable operations have earned them the 2011 National Ski Areas Association Golden Eagle Award for Overall Environmental Excellence. The Golden Eagle Award is presented to ski areas and resorts that have shown a true commitment to making sure our great outdoors will be enjoyed for years to come. I congratulate Grand Targhee and Jackson Hole Mountain Resort for their accomplishments. Wyoming is proud to be home to both of these great ski opportunities.

Jackson Hole Mountain Resort has a history of environmental excellence. They have earned their 2011 Golden Eagle Award for working for 5 years to implement an integrated environmental management system to achieve the International Organization for Standardization's, ISO, 14001 standards. This system is an overall approach to sustainability, continual improvement, and a future of responsible