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## Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JEANNE SHAHEEN, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire.

### PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Lord God, our inability to solve our problems persistently reminds us of our need of Your mercy and power. Manifest Your power on Capitol Hill, doing for our lawmakers what they cannot do for themselves. Break down the barriers that seem impenetrable, enabling them to walk by Your Spirit toward the accomplishment of goals that will bless and protect America. Lord, divert them from the strategies that lead to dead ends, guiding them toward unity and consensus. Shine forth with Your power during this challenging season.

We pray in Your mighty Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JEANNE SHAHEEN led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

### APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. INOUE).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, July 19, 2011.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JEANNE SHAHEEN, a

Senator from the State of New Hampshire, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,  
President pro tempore.

Mrs. SHAHEEN thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

### SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Madam President, following any leader remarks, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for up to 2 hours, with the two sides alternating 30-minute blocks, with the Republicans controlling the first block. Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2055, the military construction bill. The Senate will recess from 12:30 p.m. until 2:15 p.m. today for our caucus luncheons. We continue to work on amendments to the military construction appropriations bill. We hope to complete that bill within the next day.

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. McCONNELL. 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.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

### CUT, CAP, AND BALANCE

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, today Members of the House of Representatives will have a chance to stand up and be counted. They will show with their votes whether they believe in freezing Washington's current spending habits in place and raising job-killing taxes or whether they believe, as I do, that the reckless spending and debt of the past 2 years has brought us to this point of crisis, and that something serious must be done to rein it in without damaging a fragile economy with job-killing taxes.

Frankly, it is that simple. Those who support cut, cap, and balance that the House takes up today will be voting for getting our fiscal house in order and against an unsustainable status quo. Those of us who have been calling for serious short- and long-term action to cut spending, rein in our debt, and preserve entitlements congratulate those who support it.

We look forward to voting on the same legislation here in the Senate soon. Before we do, it is important to remember how far we have come in this debate. A few months ago, the President's primary goal was to raise the debt limit without any spending cuts or long-term fiscal reforms at all—nothing but more debt. Now he is claiming not only to support cuts but a proposal he likes to call “a big deal.” Anyone who has looked at the figures knows it is not. But the larger point here is that the American people have already won this debate. No one, not even the President, can claim to support the status quo anymore, even when, in fact, he does.

But, of course, winning the debate is not nearly as important as achieving the reforms that are needed to convince the world we are actually serious about getting our fiscal house in order. That is why Republicans continue to hold out for significant reforms, and that is why we will continue to fight

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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for serious, long-term reforms this week.

Republicans have tried to persuade the President of the need for a serious course correction, but weeks of negotiations have shown that his commitment to big government is simply too great to lead to the kind of long-term reforms we need to put us on a path to both balance and economic growth. So we have decided to bring our case to the American people. The President recently cited a poll that suggests Americans want to see balance in this debate. I would point him to another poll showing nearly two out of three Americans want a balanced budget. That is what Republicans are fighting for.

Today, Republicans in the House will vote on legislation that cuts government spending now, caps it in the future to the average of the last 40 years, and which will only allow for a raising of the debt limit if it is accompanied by a constitutional amendment to balance the Federal budget. Cut, cap, and balance is the kind of tough legislation Washington needs and that Americans want, and Republicans will spend the week trying to convince Democrats to join us in supporting it.

Every single Republican in the Senate supports a balanced budget amendment. All we need is 20 Democrats to join us in supporting this commonsense legislation. At least 23 of our friends on the other side have said or suggested they support the idea and told their constituents that they will "lead" on the issue. We think they should have an opportunity to follow through on their statements with an actual vote.

I will repeat what I said yesterday to my Democratic friends. If I were you, I would take a long look at the cut, cap, and balance legislation the House is taking up today and ask yourself the following question: Are you so committed to the status quo that you will vote "no" on a bill to balance the Federal budget?

I strongly urge my Democratic friends to join us in supporting the cut, cap, and balance plan. The American people sent us here to make tough choices. Agreeing to balance the budget should not be one of them. This should be an easy one. I urge my colleagues in the strongest possible terms to join us. It is time to balance the books.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

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. REID. 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.

#### CUT, CAP, AND BALANCE ACT

Mr. REID. Madam President, today the House will consider legislation that

would force the Nation to default on our financial obligations for the first time in history, unless Congress adopts a new—well, let's put it this way: What the House is working on today would force the Nation to default on our financial obligations for the first time in history. They are going to do it with a radical—radical—new constitutional amendment.

That amendment would impose arbitrary, reckless budget caps. It would, without a doubt, force massive cuts to Medicare, Social Security, and other crucial benefits. At the same time, it would constitutionally protect wasteful loopholes and tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires.

To meet an arbitrary spending cap frozen at 18 percent of gross domestic product, it would shrink benefits and services back to the levels not seen since 1966. In 1966, Medicare was 1 year old, and there were 100 million fewer people in this country. In 1966, the country had 200 million people. We now have 300 million people, and they would take us back to the levels then. It is obvious it simply would not work.

For those who think rewinding 45 years is a good thing, consider how much America has changed since 1966. For example, life expectancy is 9 years longer today than it was 45 years ago. One reason it is longer is because of Medicare. Medicare has made people healthier to live longer and lead more productive lives.

This legislation would roll back the progress that has been brought about by these programs but especially Medicare. It would enshrine in this thing they are trying to do in the House today a set of priorities so backward even advisers to President Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush have called it unwise.

In the first decade alone, it would mean more than \$3,000 a year in cuts to each senior's Social Security check. It would slash our social safety net, decimating Medicaid and cutting Medicare benefits by \$2,500 for every senior. This is per year, every year.

In fact, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office says that within 25 years, it will slash government benefits and services in half. Everyone within the sound of my voice hear what I am saying: slash benefits in half—veterans, Medicare, Medicaid. Seventy percent of the people on Medicaid are in convalescent centers. It is obvious there would not be people in convalescent centers. They would be at home having their sons, daughters, wives, and others trying to take care of them in their so-called golden years, which would come to a screeching halt.

When I talk about slashing benefits in half, I am talking about Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, veterans' benefits, and every other government service, no matter how essential. Yet it would make it almost impossible to end even the most wasteful tax breaks and loopholes already in place, such as the subsidies to oil companies, which

are making market profits with subsidies from American taxpayers. It would allow benefits to go to corporations that are shipping jobs overseas and to rich people who buy yachts and private jets. If I were rich, I wouldn't buy a yacht. It would be nice to have an airplane though. But this will not stop people from buying airplanes. It will allow the tax program to treat the rich people similar to everybody else. It would require a two-thirds majority in the House—if the House issue prevails, it would require a two-thirds majority in both Houses of Congress to raise even a penny of new revenue.

Meanwhile, the so-called cut, cap, and balance does absolutely nothing to protect our economy from the kind of recession from which we are beginning to recover. In fact, if the economy wasn't already in a recession, this legislation would quickly produce one.

Bruce Bartlett, an economic adviser to President Reagan, a fine man, and a Treasury official under President Bush, said the kind of rapid spending cuts called for in this House legislation would "unquestionably throw the economy into a recession."

This legislation goes beyond the Draconian budget Republicans passed earlier this year. That budget would have ended Medicare as we know it, and it would have cut clean energy by 70 percent, axed education funding, and cost hundreds of thousands of private sector jobs. It passed the House, but it didn't pass here.

What they are trying to do is even more Draconian than the so-called Ryan budget, the House-passed budget. They are trying to do something worse. It would attack all the same programs, but its cuts would be deeper and deeper. It would slash Social Security as well, which the House budget didn't have in it.

This legislation they are debating in the House is so restrictive, the Republicans' own budget—the budget they passed earlier this year—would not meet the standards they are now asking to be passed. It is so restrictive, not 1 year of either the George W. Bush or Ronald Reagan administrations would meet its standards.

Of the last 30 years, the only 2 years that would make the cut were during the Clinton administration. As the Washington Post said:

Every single Senate Republican has endorsed a constitutional amendment that would've made Ronald Reagan's fiscal policy unconstitutional. That's how far to the right the modern GOP has swung.

Bruce Bartlett—we talked about him before—said this about the legislation:

This is quite possibly the stupidest constitutional amendment I think I have ever seen.

I repeat the direct quote:

This is quite possibly the stupidest constitutional amendment I think I have ever seen. It looks as if it was drafted by a couple of interns on the back of a napkin.

That, in my opinion, is being awfully hard on interns.