

For the third time today, I say as sincerely as I can, I wish them well. It is extremely important we address the debt, and it is extremely important we understand we are no longer talking about credit ratings. We are talking about the default of our debt. I hope this weekend brings good sense and common sense and vitality to the work being done between the President and the House of Representatives.

I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

SECURE FISCAL PATH

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, Abraham Lincoln once said:

I am a firm believer in the people. If given the truth, they can be depended upon to meet any national crisis. The great point is to bring them the real facts.

I think that is where we are today. I think we need to bring the people the facts about our Nation's debt. People in my State see through the games being played in Washington. They want solutions, courage, and leadership—the kind that puts us on a more secure fiscal path for the future.

Mr. Bryant of Hot Springs Village, AR, writes:

We know we have to increase the debt ceiling, so let's get serious about finding a solution. . . . Why is this a problem for our politicians? The public expects responsible leadership not the demagoguery we are getting from both sides of the aisle.

That is the sentiment I hear around my State, and I am certain many of my colleagues are hearing this around the Nation.

So here are the facts: For over 230 years, the U.S. Government has honored its obligations. Even in the face of the Civil War, two World Wars, and the Depression, America has paid its bills. Yet now we stand on the brink of tarnishing the full faith and credit of the United States. We stand here because Congress has failed to bring the American people the real facts.

The easiest thing for politicians to do is say they are for lower taxes and for increased spending. This mindset has rung up a \$14.2 trillion national debt. We now borrow 41 cents of every dollar we spend.

Under this debt, combined with the theatrics playing out in the House and the Senate, the unthinkable could happen. The 80 million bills the Federal Government pays could come to a screeching halt. That means millions of seniors may not receive their Social Security checks in the mail, troops may not receive paychecks, Medicare patients could be denied care, and the stock market could significantly drop.

Moreover, credit rating agencies have warned us that we will likely lose our

AAA credit rating without immediate action. Interest rates would permanently rise, piling on additional costs for families. The costs of owning a home, buying food, filling a gas tank, sending kids to college, and buying a car will become even more expensive.

There is one more real fact I wish to highlight. A default adds heavily to our debt. For every 1-percent increase in the interest rates we pay, it adds \$1.3 trillion to the debt. It is no wonder last summer the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, "Our national debt is our biggest national security threat."

The Gang of 6 offers an alternative—a comprehensive roadmap that allows us to tackle the debt in a reasonable, responsible, and fair manner. I applaud MARK WARNER, SAXBY CHAMBLISS, KENT CONRAD, TOM COBURN, MIKE CRAPO, and DICK DURBIN on this bipartisan effort. By leaving out political agendas, these Senators—these statesmen—produced a plan to slash deficits by \$3.7 trillion over 10 years. This plan follows the blueprint put forth by the fiscal commission following a year's worth of study and collaboration.

In addition to an immediate \$500 billion downpayment, the plan puts everything on the table. It balances the need to reduce spending, adjusts entitlement programs, and reforms our Tax Code. While I may not agree with every provision, I do like that it falls on every citizen to contribute to debt reduction. It allows us to achieve measurable results without jeopardizing safety net programs meant to protect the most vulnerable among us.

Furthermore, it avoids gimmicks such as a constitutional amendment or cut, cap, and balance, which offer a nice sound bite but falls short.

I am hopeful a gang of 60 will embrace this plan and that we can include it as part of the final debt ceiling solution.

Congress has created this cliffhanger moment. Americans and leaders all over the world are now watching. The question for Congress remains: Will we rise to the occasion or will we fail?

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

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

GROWING THE ECONOMY

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I am disappointed by the outcome of the vote today in which a proposal I believe had the most merit for moving us in the right direction in regard to raising the debt ceiling and moving us toward the direction of a balanced budget failed in the Senate.

I have spoken this week several times about the importance of cut, cap,

and balance. It is the plan that has passed the House of Representatives and was the path we could take here, and I have encouraged my colleagues throughout the week to come together to try to make this cut, cap, and balance plan the framework by which we resolve this issue of the impending necessity of raising the debt ceiling.

I have said on every occasion it would be irresponsible not to raise the debt ceiling. I do not know exactly what the consequences are and at what point in time those consequences occur, but I do know it would be damaging to the economy. I also believe it would be equally, if not more, irresponsible to simply raise the debt ceiling without taking the necessary steps to put our country on the right path toward a balanced budget in the future.

I thought cut, cap, and balance really did present that opportunity in which we cut spending back to previous years' levels, we cap that spending so it is not more than a certain percentage of our gross national product, our country's economy, and, finally, that we pass a balanced budget amendment, something I have supported since I came to Congress each and every year. I believe we do not have the necessary discipline and courage, the necessity we need to make the decisions to put us on the path toward balancing the budget. Of course, if we approved a balanced budget amendment in the House and the Senate, it still would be considered by the American people through the State legislatures.

So I speak this morning with disappointment that on a straight party-line vote, this issue, this legislation was tabled. But I have also said throughout my conversations about the debt ceiling and about getting our country back on the right path that I believe there is a fourth component to cut, cap, and balance.

In my view, that fourth component is grow—cut, cap, balance, and grow the economy. Certainly, in my view, the Federal Government does not create jobs. But we have millions of Americans across our country who are looking for work, looking for better work, looking for full-time work, and we have way too many people who are discouraged, who have looked for a long time with no success.

In my view, the primary message of the November elections of last year was this insistence that Congress get it right in order to help Americans find employment. It is important. These two things are related in regard to how our country progresses.

As I have indicated, the last time our budget was balanced was at the end of President Clinton's term in office. Yes, there was some spending restraint. There was an inability of Republicans and Democrats to come together and create new programs and big government spending. But what really was happening, what was the primary reason for a balanced budget back in those days was a growing economy.

So if we want to balance our budget, I am one who says, yes, we need more revenue. But that revenue comes not from tax increases but from a growing economy that puts people to work and generates the revenue that then flows to the Federal Treasury to pay down our debt.

It is actually the most enjoyable aspect of how we could balance the budget. The side benefits beyond an improved fiscal house in Washington, DC, is that Americans would have jobs. We help create an environment in which they can put food on their families' tables, in which they can save for their kids' education, and have the opportunity to save for their own retirement.

So today I once again, in the absence of an agreement between the White House and the House and the Senate—as has been indicated, there are ongoing negotiations about this issue of the debt ceiling. But we ought to be looking also at that opportunity to grow the economy, put people to work, creating those opportunities and raising the revenue necessary to fund, in my view, a much smaller government.

So we ought to be promoting a Tax Code that is fair, that is efficient, is not overly bureaucratic, that is certain. We need a regulatory environment in which every businessperson is not fearful of adding employees or investing in the plant and equipment because they do not know what next government regulation is going to come their way.

I spent much time this year as a member of the Senate Banking Committee where we have heard from bankers across the country, particularly our community banks, where the uncertainty of what next happens under Dodd-Frank determines whether it is desirable to make a loan. What next is the examiner going to say? What next are the regulations going to be?

Access to credit for our small business men and women in Kansas, our farmers and ranchers—the ability to borrow money has a significant role to play in whether we have a growing economy that puts people to work. So we certainly need to have that fair and certain Tax Code. We certainly need to make certain the regulatory environment is totally different than what it is today. And we need to make certain there is no doubt about the ability—due to regulations—that a bank can make a loan to a creditworthy borrower.

We also desperately need a policy in place that encourages domestic production of oil and gas, that helps us reduce the cost of energy. I do not know how we have a booming economy if energy prices are going to continue to escalate at the rates they are. The more that cost of gasoline reduces the spending power of American families, the less likely we are going to have any opportunity to see a growing economy.

Certainly, we have challenges in our housing market that need attention,

and it is difficult for many of us to make decisions about spending more money if we do not have the sense of security that comes from knowing there is value in our homes.

Finally, I want to point out—and the issue I want to focus on for a moment because of what appears to be coming from the Obama administration in regard to trade—there is an indication that, once again, the ability for Congress to consider the trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea is being delayed. Much of our country's economy—and certainly in my home State of Kansas—is dependent, and many people by the millions work in the United States because of things we manufacture and agricultural commodities we grow that are exported abroad.

The last three trade agreements that have been negotiated have been pending now for a very long time. The consequences of those trade agreements are significant. I certainly know this as a Kansan. We manufacture airplanes and general aviation. We grow lots of agricultural commodities: wheat, cattle, corn. Much of that is exported, and these countries present opportunities for us to grow our economy and put more people to work.

The South Korea Free Trade Agreement, for example, if approved, is estimated to create 70,000 new jobs. It is estimated that it would be an increase in U.S. exports of \$9.7 billion, and our gross domestic product would increase by over \$10 billion. Yet the framework by which we can begin to increase our exports to those three countries is once again stalled.

The White House announced this week those trade agreements will not be presented to Congress before the August recess. In my view, that is a terrible mistake, and it is particularly a problem because, as we speak, other countries are assuming the role of exporting to those countries, assuming the role that the United States has historically played, and we are being left out in the market.

A free-trade agreement just recently took effect between South Korea and the European Union. Colombia and Canada have an agreement that comes into force on August 15. The more time we delay in approving the opportunity for Americans to export to those countries, the more likely it is that the markets are going to be taken by exporters from other countries.

So while we continue to work to see that an agreement is reached in regard to this issue of the debt ceiling, let's not take any steps back in regard to this issue of growing the economy. Let's continue to work in regard to that Tax Code, in regard to that regulatory environment that so hinders the ability of business to expand, in regard to an energy policy that returns those jobs back home and creates greater stability in the price and cost of energy. We also need to make certain we have access to credit.

But, finally, today, let me again ask the administration to reconsider their position, and let's put these trade opportunities—the ability to increase exports—back on the table so Congress can adequately address the terms of those agreements and get them in place before we lose more market opportunity around the globe.

This is not about taking care of big business. This is about making certain that business has the opportunity to sell goods and agricultural commodities to those countries, so that in the process of their business growing they put more and more Kansans and Americans to work.

So we have our agenda, and it is an important one for America. Yes, fiscal sanity has to return, but let's not forget the fourth component of cut, cap, balance, and grow the economy. If we do these things, America will be a better place today. But, more importantly, every American child will have the opportunity to pursue the American dream.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

SILVER FLEECE AWARD

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, As we continue to debate our economic future I would like to announce July's Silver Fleece Award winner. This month's most wasteful spending project is another example of the egregious Federal spending habits of this government and demonstrates why exactly we need to enact the Cut, Cap and Balance Act.

The Silver Fleece Award for the month of July goes to a \$64 million stimulus award to provide broadband service to Gallatin County, MT. According to an analysis conducted by Navigant Consulting, 93 percent of the households in the project's proposed service area were already served by five or more broadband providers. The fact that tens of millions of taxpayer dollars were spent to subsidize broadband service in an area with already strong private sector representation is reprehensible. Perhaps even more staggering, though, is the taxpayer cost of these services per unserved household.

According to the program's own definition of "unserved household," this project cost taxpayers more than \$340,000 per unserved household.

However, many of these so-called unserved households have access to 3G