

right thing for our country. If that is the case, now is the time to finally come to the table.

Here is the truth: Many of us here are trying to prevent our economy from driving off a cliff, but others seem to be busy cutting the brake lines. On that point, I was proud of the Senate and the Democrats and Republicans who came together on the bipartisan Bowles-Simpson Commission and came up with a plan on reducing the deficit. They were willing to be a part of the solution.

The Bowles-Simpson Commission recommended taking important but difficult steps to reduce our debt by \$4 trillion over the next decade. That plan is the right one for the country, and despite the significant political risks attached to taking those positions, Senators in both parties were willing to support it. The House Members, on the other hand, when the fiscal commission offered them the bipartisan deficit reduction plan, walked away, both Democrats and Republicans, to be fair.

Unfortunately, this has become a pattern. When Vice President JOE BIDEN and House Majority Leader ERIC CANTOR were close to finally reaching an agreement on a deficit reduction plan, it was the House Republicans who walked away. When President Obama and Speaker BOEHNER sought to strike a "grand bargain," to do something great for the country, the House walked away. President Obama likened this to being left at the altar, but I cannot think of any description that is more apt than "irresponsible."

For my friends and my colleagues who know me, I am not quick to anger. But I have to say, time is not our friend here and we cannot delay action any longer. I was pleased to see Senator ALEXANDER, the third ranking Republican in the Senate, say last night:

What would be best, instead of having a Republican plan competing with a Democratic plan, would be to have the Speaker, Senator Reid, and Senator McConnell recommend to us a single plan.

I understand the Senate leaders are speaking frequently, and I have all the faith in the world that the Senate could work this problem out. But that is only half the problem. We need statesmen, we need patriots, we need problem solvers over in the House to emerge. Campaign politics and partisan talking points do not take courage. Now is the time for courage and leadership.

Instead of going back to the drawing board on the Boehner plan, we need to refocus our efforts on a plan that meets three tests. Such a plan has to, No. 1, raise the debt limit to avoid a first ever Federal Government default; No. 2, provide enough certainty to investors that America will pay its bills to stave off a downgrade in our credit rating; and, No. 3, reduce the deficit enough that we can begin the hard work to get our fiscal house in order.

The Reid plan, in my estimation, achieves each of those goals. While I

am disappointed we could not all come together on a larger \$4 to \$5 trillion deficit reduction package that would be both bipartisan and comprehensive, the Reid plan adequately addresses the most pressing issues that confront us, which are preventing a default and staving off a downgrade in our credit rating.

The Boehner plan, on the other hand, is only a short-term fix, and a host of economic forecasters and business leaders have said it would almost certainly lead to a downgrade in our, in America's, credit rating, which would raise interest rates, could sabotage seniors' retirement savings, and increase consumer costs on almost every American.

Bank of America, Standard & Poor's, JPMorgan Chase, and other major players have all warned us that future economic instability and short-term political solutions will almost certainly lead to a downgrade in our credit rating. That is some serious business.

What is sad about all of this is that the unstable political climate—which one observer called "amateur hour on Capitol Hill"—itself may lead to a downgrade.

I respect the Speaker's desire to go back to the drawing board to try to secure more Republican votes, but the fact is we do not have time. The Reid plan is ready to go, and it meets the three-part test I laid out. In fact, the Congressional Budget Office stated that the Reid plan reduces the deficit by twice as much as the House Republican plan. As reported this morning "in the battle of budget scores, the Senate Democrats deficit reduction bill is the clear winner thus far."

Our economy has been in critical condition, and I think we are feeling recently that it is beginning to come back to life, that we have been nursing it back to health. The last result we need is a self-inflicted heart attack caused by an overdose of partisanship. People wonder why we cannot get it done.

I know the Presiding Officer is a mountain climber, as am I, and we are both, I guess, old mountain climbers in more ways than one. I can tell you that there are some similarities between attempting to climb the world's highest peaks and our work here in Washington. But the difference seems to be, especially when the going gets tough here on Capitol Hill, that not only are you trying to conquer mountainous and challenging and difficult terrain, you seem to have a team of saboteurs here who are trying to push the rest of us off the mountain as we are trying to climb it. The Scots have a saying: It is not the falling off that hurts. It is the sudden stop at the bottom. I can tell you, if we do not raise the debt ceiling, that is going to involve a sudden stop at the bottom for all of us.

The people of Colorado have told me—and I suspect the rest of the Nation feels this way—they do not care

who wins politically. Frankly, I do not care who wins politically either. What I care about is passing legislation that will stave off government default and a downgrade in our Nation's credit rating. At this point, the Reid plan is the only option that meets that criteria. Let's get it done. Let's get it done.

TRIBUTE TO HILLARY DANIELS

Mr. President, as I close, I want to change the tone of my remarks a little bit because there are wonderful people who work here on Capitol Hill and make a difference day in and day out, and I want to recognize Hillary Daniels, who has been one of my budget and appropriations legislative assistants, who joined my team when I first came to the Senate 3 years ago.

She is a native of Colorado's western slope, the great county of Mesa and the town of Grand Junction. She is going to be leaving my office next month to go to law school at Washington University in St. Louis, MO.

She has been an invaluable team member, and I can speak for my entire staff when I say we are both excited for her to take this next step in developing her career and I am very grateful for the guidance she has given me over the last few years.

It is for the Hillary Daniels of the world, who will be leaders of our country in the next decade and the decade after that, that I think we owe an obligation to getting this job done as soon as we possibly can, assuring the markets that the full faith and credit of the United States will be preserved and protected and nurtured.

Let's turn back to job one here, which is to focus on our economy and job creation. The longer we are stalled out in a political crisis of our own making, the less we are concerned and focused on putting the American people back to work.

Mr. President, thank you for your interest, thank you for your attention.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

SPECTRUM AUCTIONS

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, I just filed an amendment to S. 1323 to BRAC the spectrum. This would give us the maximum auction revenue and access to spectrum for economic development and deficit reduction. I am proud to have the amendment endorsed by Americans for Tax Reform.

It is very important for the Congress to authorize spectrum incentive auctions. While we should protect broadcasters who choose not to participate in such actions and their customers who rely on over-the-air broadcast for entertainment and public emergency information, incentive auctions would free up much needed spectrum for the civilian side in making sure that broadband communications are fully available in the United States.

It should be, in short, the policy of the United States to offer the widest

amount of broadband spectrum to empower the 21st century economy here—cell phones were invented in the United States, in fact, mostly in my home State of Illinois—and making sure this is the country where not just 1G and 2G and 3G were invented and deployed, but to make sure 5G and 6G and 7G are also deployed first in the United States and not in a country such as China or India.

According to the Federal Communications Commission, the U.S. Treasury has already collected \$50 billion in spectrum receipts since 1993. Senator REID's plan does authorize such auctions, but it is missing a key element to ensure they are very successful. Unfortunately, like many other agencies in the administration, the Federal Communications Commission has worked to promulgate regulations that stifle innovation and economic growth. It is important for Congress to prohibit the FCC from establishing new, similar rules or conditions that are outside the scope of technical, ethical, or geographic qualifications. Such conditions, for example, the "net neutrality" provisions, will only serve to depress the market value of the spectrum; therefore, decreasing government revenues and lowering our ability to reduce the deficit in this way.

One recent study found that "Congress has tremendous discretion about the amount of proceeds it could raise in exchange for spectrum" because "the amount of money that an auction can raise for the [U.S.] Treasury [and the government] is impacted at least in part by controllable decisions about how the auction configures the spectrum for sale and the conditions imposed on it." The study analyzed a previous spectrum auction to estimate the potential receipts from future actions based on conditions the FCC may or may not impose. The researchers found that the full auction potential of the broadcast spectrum with no conditions imposed would raise as much as \$91 billion, whereas the same auction with heavy and unappealing conditions, such as net neutrality, would only raise \$26 billion. That is a difference of \$65 billion. We could raise, to lower our deficit, 250 percent more in funds with an incentive auction if we ensure that the FCC does not impose market-killing restrictions.

My proposal would place limits on the FCC, in addition to establishing a number of other prohibitions to make sure the FCC does not artificially reduce the spectrum value, to lower our deficit. The Kirk amendment would prohibit the FCC from restricting participants in any auction and from prescribing certain rates, terms, or services that may be offered by bidders in order to encourage the most robust participation and license bidding. To avoid future devaluation of spectrum licenses, the amendment would also prohibit the FCC from changing the rules of the game after an auction was completed.

But simply selling spectrum voluntarily given up by broadcasters is not enough to solve our credit crunch. We know that wireless subscribership in the United States has increased more than 400 percent in the last 15 years, and experts expect mobile data traffic to be 35 times higher in 2014 than it was back in 2009. Yet only 22 percent of all viable wireless frequencies are licensed for mobile broadband. Industry experts anticipate spectrum will be exhausted in the most populous markets by 2014. Such a restriction then would stunt wireless and other technological development in the United States because we will not have enough bandwidth to continue innovating. Internet service will then slow and calls will be dropped. We should not let this scenario unfold. We should reach our full technological potential because broadband development is a key job creator for the 21st century.

According to one estimate, the information and communications industry contributed more than \$1.7 trillion to the U.S. gross domestic product in 2009 or over 12 percent of our total national income. Another study found that broadband provides additional annual consumer benefits of roughly \$32 billion per year. It is widely acknowledged that wireless broadband also generates productivity gains of approximately \$28 billion annually, and one cost estimate even puts productivity gains from the development and use of wireless broadband at almost \$860 billion in 2016. In my own State of Illinois, this study estimates that the savings from increased productivity will reach about \$5.8 billion in 5 years. This demonstrates that every sector of our economy benefits from wireless development.

For example, broadband development will vastly improve health care services for seniors. One study finds that reduced medical costs, reduced costs of institutionalized living, and increased output generated by seniors and disabled individuals will save about \$927 billion between 2005 and 2030. Advancements in wireless technologies aim to reduce the burden on the chronically ill by providing remote monitoring of medical functions and to save lives through public safety interoperable networks.

Yet very little of this will be achievable unless we make more spectrum available to the civilian sector. Not surprisingly, the Federal Government itself is the largest and most stubborn squatter on the spectrum. According to the Technology Policy Institute, the government currently has exclusive or shared ownership of more than half the ideal spectrum for wireless development.

Much of the spectrum is not even being used or used inefficiently by the government. Unfortunately, it is largely unknown how exactly Federal agencies and departments are using the spectrum and which spectrum we could better use on the civilian side.

My amendment, in short, would establish a process identical to the successful Base Realignment and Closure Commission to determine which Federal spectrum should be offered for sale or shared use by the private sector. While the government has much of this authority, it consistently fails to utilize it.

A BRAC-like commission for the spectrum is a key model for its reallocation and would help accelerate the development of broadband in the United States, without the standard congressional roadblocks that would inhibit development.

The amendment also provides assurances that the government will vacate spectrum once the process is complete and requires the Office of Management and Budget to intervene in the relocation process if agencies are failing to comply with the relocation plan and penalizing agencies if they do not meet the BRAC timeline.

The Kirk amendment would provide the telecommunications industry with a certain path forward for reliably clear spectrum to advance employment in the United States through wireless advancement.

I urge congressional leaders to consider this proposal. It comes from neither Republican nor Democratic sides. It is one of the most valuable assets that the government is currently squatting on and could be part of an overall deficit reduction plan totalling upward of \$90 billion, but I think that benefit understates the true potential. Because if we set a goal of the United States being the country that offers the most broadband wireless spectrum, then we ensure that this critical 21st century industry remains in the United States and that the pace of innovation in wireless always is fastest in America as opposed to Asia or Europe.

That is why I put the amendment forward. I would seek its adoption as part of our deficit negotiations.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes.

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

THE DEBT CEILING

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, Senate majority leader HARRY REID has presented a plan to address our deficits and to end the debt ceiling impasse that threatens to cripple our economy.

The Treasury is projected to run out of money next week and time is running short. Senator REID has shown great leadership with his pragmatic package. Leader REID's proposal would give the Treasury the authority to ensure the United States does not default on its debt, while at the same time cutting \$2.7 trillion from our budget.

The unprecedented set of cuts would have a significant effect in balancing