

path which will do exactly the opposite of what the American people want. Our Republican friends have been absolutely fanatically determined that no matter what happens, billionaires and large corporations will not pay a nickel more in taxes. That has been their religious belief, not a nickel more from the wealthiest people in this country. I have to say Democrats have not been particularly strong in opposition to that nor has the President been strong, with retreat after retreat.

In recent months, we have heard more and more discussion from Democrats about cuts in Social Security, cuts in Medicare, cuts in Medicaid. Now there is apparently a willingness to come forward with a proposal that would include only cuts and no revenue at all—no revenue at all.

I think the American people are angry. I think they are frustrated. I think they are disillusioned because what they want to see happen is deficit reduction done through shared sacrifice, although with the wealthy and large corporations playing their role appears not to be happening. And when they have said loudly and clearly that we must protect Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, they are also seeing that it is not happening.

So I just conclude by saying I think there is a path toward deficit reduction which is fair and responsible. It does ask the big-money interests to understand that they are Americans also and they have to play a role in deficit reduction. It does say that at a time when we have tripled military spending since 1997, we have to make significant cuts there as well.

I hope our Republican friends give up their fanatical opposition to asking billionaires and millionaires and large corporations to play a role in deficit reduction. I hope my Democratic friends will stand tall. And I hope that at the end of the day, we have the deficit-reduction program the American people will feel good about.

With that, I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MERKLEY). The Senator from Maryland.

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

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

#### FAA REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, we all know we are running against the deadline of Tuesday, August 2, on raising the debt of our Nation, and there is a real risk that if we don't make that deadline on Tuesday, there will be checks from the Federal Government that will not be able to go out. The number of 70 million is used as the number of checks written each month by the Federal Government that go to employees, that go to contractors, that go to recipients of certain benefits.

Let me talk about 4,000 Federal workers who already have been furloughed. It doesn't have to do with

raising the debt ceiling; it has to do with the failure of the House of Representatives to send a clean extension of the Federal Aviation Administration—the FAA reauthorization bill—for us to consider. As a result of the failure to pass the reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration or to pass a short-term extension of the FAA, 4,000 workers at the Federal Aviation Administration have been put on furlough. That in and of itself has a major impact on our economy. That is 4,000 Americans who are no longer receiving a paycheck. It affects people who work for the FAA in such fields as safety engineers, computer scientists, aeronautics engineers, physical scientists—the list goes on and on—jeopardizing the progress we have made in keeping our airways safe and jeopardizing the convenience to those who travel by air. Many of those workers live in the State of Maryland, so it is having a direct effect on the State I have the honor of representing in the Senate.

It goes beyond just the Federal workforce who have been put on furlough as a result of the failure to pass a short-term extension of the FAA. It also goes to construction contracts that are funded through aviation funds. At many airports around the Nation, there have now been stop orders on construction of runways, construction of towers, and construction of other improvements that are important to keep our airports modern and safe and convenient in handling the increased number of air passengers.

Let me tell my colleagues that, yes, it affects those large contractors who are doing the work of the Federal Government. It is going to affect their payrolls and their workforce, but it also affects a lot of small businesses in Maryland and around the Nation.

Let me give one example. Chappy Corporation is an electrical and mechanical operations small business specializing in airport landing systems and lighting. Chappy Corporation is the lead contractor implementing BWI's—the main airport in Maryland—ASDE-X project, a runway safety mechanism that enables air traffic controllers to detect potential runway conflicts by providing detailed coverage of movement on runways and taxiways. For the safety of all of us, I hope we would want to move forward with those types of improvements in our major airports in the Nation, including the one which most Marylanders use—BWI Airport. Chappy Corporation has been told to stop work on this important aviation safety project, thus decreasing their value and making it more difficult to make payroll. It is already tough for small companies out there today, and now, because of the failure of the House to send over to us a clean extension of the FAA bill, which we have done many times in the past, we have a company such as Chappy which is running the risk of its strength to continue with its current

workforce and to do important work at airports for safety.

It also goes beyond the Federal employees and the contractor employees who are not getting a paycheck and the contractors whose work has been stopped and they are not getting their construction contract payments. It also affects the Federal Aviation Administration's revenues. They collect a lot of revenue. There is a ticket tax. When a person buys an airline ticket, they pay a tax that goes into the Federal Aviation Administration's funds which are used for improvement projects at our airports. That amounts to about \$30 million that will not be collected. What happens to that money? Well, we lose it in the Federal Treasury. People say: Well, maybe it will make it less expensive for people to travel. But that is not the case.

Let me quote a headline from Reuters: "Airlines Raise Fares as Taxes Lapse."

I am quoting:

Many U.S. airlines have raised fares in recent days to take advantage of a lapse in U.S. ticket tax collection after Congress failed last week to fully fund the Federal Aviation Administration's budget, but passengers are not likely to notice any price difference.

JetBlue Airways Corp. and Southwest Airlines Co. began raising ticket prices by at least 7.5 percent on Friday, according to FareCompare.com. Other airlines, such as Delta Air Lines and United Continental Holdings Inc., boosted prices on Saturday.

So we can't collect the 7.5-percent tax and the airlines are pocketing the money. The people who are purchasing tickets are still paying the same amount even though none of that money is going to improve our airports. It makes no sense whatsoever.

All of these occurrences—the Federal workers not getting a paycheck and being put on furlough, contractors not getting paid and construction work not being done, revenues not being collected that are necessary for the Federal Government—are hurting our economy. All are making it more difficult for our recovery.

Why has this happened? The reason, quite frankly, is that we have not been able to pass the reauthorization bill. We passed the reauthorization bill early in the session, the Senate did. The House passed a bill about 100 days ago but has refused to appoint conferees to work out the differences. Then the House sends over—because we didn't meet the deadline—an extension bill that includes a partisan labor provision, an antilabor provision. Now, that should never be in an extension bill. It shouldn't be in any legislation. But it should be negotiated between the conferees of the House and Senate so we can get a reauthorization bill done. They shouldn't use an extension bill in order to get that done, and that is what they have done. As a result, we have the consequences of Federal workers being furloughed, contractors not being paid, and revenues necessary for our airport improvements not being collected.

So what should we do? What do we need to do? Well, we need to first pass a short-term extension, a clean short-term extension without these killer amendments attached to allow our workforce to be able to work and to get their paychecks, to allow contractors to continue the work they are doing, and to allow the government to collect the revenue necessary to keep our airports modern. That is the first thing we should do.

Secondly, we need to negotiate in good faith between the House and the Senate conferees so we can pass the Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization bill. That bill contains many very important provisions, including what we call NextGen, which is the way in which we can operate our air service in a much more efficient way, using less fuel, less time, and helping our economy. The FAA reauthorization bill is estimated to create hundreds of thousands of jobs for our country. We need to get that done. So we need to negotiate the bill, get that done, and all of that will help create more jobs for our community.

I urge my colleagues, particularly those in the House, to send us a clean extension bill, negotiate in good faith, and let's get the FAA bill done.

Actually, I see the ranking member of that committee, our colleague from Texas, who may wish to talk about it or some other issue.

With that, I yield the floor.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** The Senator from Texas.

**Mrs. HUTCHISON.** Mr. President, I am here to talk about the renomination of FBI Director Mueller, but I certainly heard my colleague from Maryland, and I agree we must pass a clean extension of the FAA. We are losing the revenue, and we are losing the capability for projects that are ongoing to continue. Work has stopped at many of the airports that have building and repair projects that are supported by the FAA.

Honestly, the House needs to send a clean extension. There is a clean extension pending in the Senate. It has been objected to by one Member. This is not the way to go forward. I happen to agree with much of what the House wants to do, but not in this way. We have to put that in the context of the whole bill, which we certainly should be doing, and I hope the House will send us a clean extension so there will not be another weekend of disruption and people can get on with the projects.

I come to the floor today to speak about FBI Director Robert Mueller. He has been FBI Director since 2001. During a critical time when our country has experienced such major leadership changes on our national security team, this nomination offers the necessary stability and continuity from a proven leader who has wide support.

Director Mueller has strong bipartisan support. He was appointed on August 2, 2001—just before the 9/11 trag-

edy—by President Bush, and he began serving a week before the September 11 attacks. His term is said to expire next week on August 2.

The FBI has never experienced a larger transformation than while under his leadership, adding counterterrorism, counterintelligence, and cyber security to the Bureau's traditional crime-fighting mission. In the 10 years Mr. Mueller has been Director of the FBI, he has worked tirelessly to ensure that no international terrorist attacks have occurred on U.S. soil since 9/11, and there have been several plots that have been uncovered and kept from occurring.

Director Mueller has ensured that the FBI is a full member of the U.S. intelligence community and serves as a critical and singular link between the intelligence and law enforcement communities in the United States. He served our Nation with valor and integrity as a marine in Vietnam and as a Federal prosecutor. He answered the call to service from President Bush to be FBI Director and is once again answering the call by agreeing to serve 2 more years under President Obama. He is an admirable public servant, and I urge his swift confirmation.

#### THE DEBT CEILING

Mr. President, we are less than 6 days away from the date the Department of the Treasury has signified would shut down the Federal Government and exhaust all borrowing authority.

We all know we are at this point because we have a fundamental difference in the principles on how our government should be run. We all know we are at this point because the financial viability of our Nation is at stake.

I believe this debt ceiling debate presents Congress with a critical opportunity to get our country back on a sustainable and prosperous path. We must send a message to the markets, to the American people, and to American businesses that we are going to get our fiscal house in order with spending cuts, caps on future spending, and permanent budget reform in the form of a balanced budget amendment.

What we need now is a serious proposal to provide certainty and clear commitment to a reform measure that ensures spending cuts before the debt ceiling is raised. The Senate majority leader's and the House Speaker's plans have similarity, and I believe a common ground can be found in the two.

First, neither of the plans proposes tax increases to achieve deficit reduction, and both plans aim for significant deficit savings in the amount of \$1.2 trillion over the next 10 years.

Now, is that what we wanted? No. I would have had more cuts. We should be reaching for \$4 trillion in cuts, not \$1.2 trillion. But we have had plans put forward for \$4 trillion, we have had plans put forward for more, and we could not get those through. We could not get one through the Senate. Furthermore, entitlements are not in the plans that are before us, and entitle-

ment reform is essential for us to address. We can certainly put Social Security on the fiscally responsible path that will make it secure for 75 years with very minor changes and gradual changes if we do it now. This is an opportunity. Because we have only 6 days, we are not going to be able to do it in this vehicle.

But there is a plan going forward that our leader, Senator MCCONNELL, and Senator REID, along with a bipartisan group of Senators, have put forward a plan. I think we need to look towards the long term and not let this opportunity pass to do something that will be enduring for the fiscal responsibility of our country.

But we have 6 days, and now we have to do something as responsible as possible with the time we have left and keep open the option of doing what we should be doing for the long term before the end of this year. That is what Senator MCCONNELL, Senator REID, and many other Senators have put on the table. That is what we need to try to achieve.

But we have made great strides. What Republicans said from the beginning is, they are not going to support tax increases of any kind in this economic climate. Businesses are not hiring. A 9.2-percent unemployment rate is unacceptable. Our businesses are afraid of the Obama health care plan and its costs. They are factoring that into their plans, and they are not hiring people because of the expense. Add more tax increases on top of that and our economy is going to be stagnant for a long time. So tax increases are off the table.

But I do hope we can also make the cuts that will put us on a fiscally responsible plan so we will not have to address this debt ceiling ever again.

So we have made a major achievement. Sometimes it seems as though when we have to come together to do something that is not ideal, we do not take acknowledgment of the fact that we are making one smaller step in the right direction. I think in order to avoid a fiscal calamity, we do need to make the strongest step we can make, which is cutting spending and doing it without increasing taxes.

The idea that we could tax our way out of debt has been totally discounted. Neither of these plans includes tax hikes to offset the deficit reduction, and that is a strong endorsement. Both proposals also include budget enforcement of discretionary caps by requiring automatic across-the-board cuts if the caps are not met. That will put a Governor on future spending that will keep the promise we are making to cut spending.

Both proposals establish a bipartisan committee to identify further deficit reduction that would include tax reform and fix the broken entitlement programs. I hope we will not throw that out the window. Having a commission—I know people roll their eyes and say: Oh, another commission. Really?