

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?

Well, if we have a finite end date and have the opportunity to make more real cuts, it is worth another chance. We do need to make entitlement reforms.

If we can do tax reform that lowers the tax rate for everyone and brings in revenue by having more people hired off the unemployment rolls, that is a win. We raise revenue by putting more people back to work. That is the way you raise revenue, not by tax increases that put a lid on hiring.

So I think we have some good things that can be put together. We need to make sure we go forward, as much as we can with a divided Congress, and try to make a step in the right direction. Then, hopefully before the end of the year, we will be able to take stronger steps that will have a more lasting impact.

I, for one, think it is not even a possibility that we would allow the debt ceiling to be met and start the process then of watching the President decide who gets paid and who does not.

I have a bill I have introduced with strong support that would make the priority paying the interest on our debt and paying our soldiers, our men and women who have boots on the ground in harm's way. If you are Active-Duty military, you should not waste 1 minute thinking about whether you are going to make your mortgage.

I want to say that I commend USAA. USAA is the corporation that serves so many of our military personnel. They have put out their policy that in case the debt limit is reached, USAA has stated that for those military members, who are on active duty and have their paychecks directly deposited into their USAA account, they are going to provide a one-time, interest-free advance for their paycheck.

They also know the stresses on those members of the armed services. USAA is doing a wonderful thing by putting the families of loved ones across the sea fighting for our security at ease.

So I commend USAA. At the same time, I would like for my bill to be passed that assures that those military servicemembers who are not customers of USAA will also have the comfort of knowing their paychecks will be there on time. So I hope if all else fails in this body, we can pass the legislation that says we will pay our debts and we will pay our military and Social Security recipients will also be paid.

But I do not think we ought to get that far at all. That is why I am urging our Members to work with our leaders. Do not throw stones at our leaders. They have a tough job corralling 100 pretty big egos, and we ought to be helping them get to the point where we are all comfortable that we are doing the right thing. Sometimes we cannot get 100 percent of what we want when there are 100 people who have their individual ideas as well.

So I hope we will take this chance to do so much for our country that we have the opportunity to do. We may

have to do it in smaller steps to reach that goal, but if we reach the goal, we will have secured the future for our children, and that is what we are here for.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

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

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

#### THE DEBT CEILING

Mr. WEBB. Mr. President, I would like to express my support for the majority leader's plan to raise the debt ceiling and reduce the deficit. Our Nation, as we all know, faces a looming crisis.

The markets have already warned us. Businesses are already postponing investments. We know the consequences of inaction. They are predictable. Borrowing costs for businesses and individuals will escalate. Interest payments on the debt will grow. Already anemic job growth will decline. Our Nation will run the risk of another financial catastrophe and possibly a return to recession. As Chairman Bernanke recently stated, the outcome would be "calamitous."

Many Americans are struggling. Far too many remain out of work. They cannot be asked to absorb the shock waves of yet another failure to act. It is time, as the Senator from Texas just pointed out—and others have—for both sides and both Chambers to find common ground.

Reasonable and responsible editorials from across the country have endorsed the majority leader's proposal. Well-meaning people on all sides have a genuine concern and have shown genuine concerns. We all—most all of us—share those concerns about the implications of not acting.

There are in the other party some individuals who view themselves as revolutionaries in the best sense of the word. They appear less concerned with the here and now than with where they want to take the country in the future. We all understand the two are connected and that looking to the future is vital to the country. The question, though, is the harm that might be caused by precipitous action.

Columnist George Will wrote a column a few days ago likening the tea party movement of today to the beginning of the Goldwater-Reagan conservative era; that the Goldwater movement of 1964, even though it did not bring Senator Goldwater to the Presidency, was the first step toward the conservative revolution that culminated in Ronald Reagan's election in 1980.

I am going to quote a couple of sentences Mr. Will wrote:

The tea party, [which in his view is] the most welcome . . . development since the Goldwater insurgency in 1964, lacks only the patience necessary when America lacks the consensus required to propel fundamental change. . . .

Mr. Will goes on to say:

If Washington's trajectory could be turned as quickly as tea partiers wish . . . their movement would not be as necessary as it is.

Those are Mr. Will's words. That is Mr. Will's considered opinion. That may be so, and it may not be so. But the first rule of good governance is to do no harm. That does not mean we should not make cuts. That does not mean we should not look toward some of the directions this debate has taken us. But it means be careful when you are dealing with a fragility of national policy at a time like this.

Some things sound better in a speech to a room full of activists than they actually are in the reality of how to govern and the practicality of how to actually bring about change, where change is needed.

Senator Goldwater did not attempt to torpedo the economy in order to get his way. Ronald Reagan, in whose administration I proudly served, by the way, raised the national debt 18 times—more than any other President.

I fought in Vietnam as an infantry marine. I am very proud of that. Those of us who did fight in Vietnam all remember the regretful quote of one infantry officer who lamented that during one battle he had to call in heavy artillery and airstrikes on a populated village; that he had to destroy a village in order to save it.

I do not think the Republicans who are using this issue as a lever to bring about their view of radical change want to look back at a fractured economic recovery, a downgraded credit rating for the world's No. 1 economy, a citizenry that has become more angry and less capable of predicting its own financial future, and then say, as if all of this were not predictable, that they destroyed the American economy in order to save it.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEAHY. 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. LEAHY. Mr. President, I know my distinguished colleague, the senior Senator from West Virginia, is going to be seeking recognition, and perhaps others. I certainly have no objection to that. I realize we are on the Mueller nomination.

I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding any interruption for other business, the Mueller vote still be at the time we originally planned, which is around 4 p.m.

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

Mr. LEAHY. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

#### FAA REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, last week I came to the Senate floor to