

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

ask unanimous consent to pass something called—a very easy thing—a clean extension of the FAA bill, something the Senate has done 20 times. This is the 21st time—4 years waiting to pass a reauthorization bill.

But for the first time in these 4 years, the Republicans objected to this extraordinarily routine request. Shortly, I will renew my request to pass our 21st short-term extension of the FAA. But before I do, I want to highlight the very painful consequences of failing to pass this bill, which we can only do by getting a clean extension.

By objecting to my request last week, Republican Senators made sure that 4,000 hard-working FAA employees were furloughed already. Hundreds of critical airport safety capacity air traffic control projects were brought to a halt. Payments were stopped to hundreds of small businesses dependent upon reimbursement from the FAA for their work.

The Federal Government is being forced to forego almost \$30 million a day in aviation tax revenue that is critical, obviously, to supporting our overall airport infrastructure program. The introduction of the newest Boeing aircraft is being delayed because the FAA cannot certify that the planes operate safely.

I know in Washington we have a tendency to view these fights as purely policy disagreements that have no real impact on people. I stress that there is an enormous effect on people and businesses, large and small, and on the economy of the United States. Because some Republicans have refused to allow another clean extension of the FAA programs, something we have done 20 times in the last 4 years, we are inflicting real pain on very real people.

People are suffering. Small businesses are hurting. We are losing jobs and will lose a lot more. Even consumers are losing out on the airline ticket tax holidays.

The majority of the airline industry has greedily chosen to pocket those revenues rather than reducing ticket prices. In other words, they have a tax holiday because the expiration of the tax has already taken place a number of days ago. So they are taking this tax holiday, and rather than leaving at the present level the cost of a ticket for consumers—as Alaska Airlines is doing and Virgin Airlines is doing and one other airline is doing—they are taking the money to themselves, giving it to themselves.

I find that extraordinary. It reminds me of “Too Big to Fail”—the movie—the greed, the promise to help with small mortgages and they got all the money and didn’t spend a dime to help with small mortgages.

The damage we are doing to our aviation system is incredibly real. If we fail to act in a timely manner, it may be so devastating as to become irreversible. It makes sense when we think about it. If one were to operate on somebody and cut beyond a certain point, they can’t reverse the damage.

With so much pain being inflicted on so many, one may ask why my Republican colleagues have refused repeated requests to pass a clean extension—something we have done 20 times in the past 4 years.

They are willing, evidently, to hurt so many of these people for the benefit of one company. It is called Delta Airlines. As the chairman of the House Transportation Committee has stated publicly, the House inserted language on the Essential Air Service Program to leverage the Senate on including provisions relating to the National Mediation Board.

What do I mean? What they sent to us was all about essential air service. But that is not what it is about at all. The chairman, my counterpart in the House told me many times that essential air service is not a big deal to him. He doesn’t particularly have a dog in this hunt. We need to do some reform on it, which we offered to do. He didn’t mention a thing about the National Mediation Board. That is the only thing that motivates the House.

Delta Airlines is nonunion. The other airlines, for the most part, are union. Delta Airlines has had four elections in the last several years to unionize. Each time the company has prevailed over the union. So one might ask: Why is it that they are so strongly suggesting they need this National Mediation Board, which they changed in their bill.

It had been changed 2 years ago to say the number of votes that were cast were the number of votes that were reflected. In their bill, they want to say that anybody who does not vote in a union certification election, by definition, has voted no. I have never heard of that in America anywhere else. It is a rather ridiculous ploy.

This is not policy, this is pettiness. It has become the typical “my way or the highway” thinking of the House Republicans.

I note that we have forgone almost \$150 million in tax revenues by failing to act. It will go up by about \$25 million a day, which, when we think about it, would come close to paying for the whole Essential Air Service Program anyway, in just a week or so. Again, by the end of the week, we will have lost more revenue used for aviation infrastructure spending than on the entire Essential Air Service Program cost all of last year. It is embarrassing.

I wish my Republican colleagues would have defended the prerogatives of the Senate. Instead, some chose to back the House leadership.

Last week, as my friend from Utah—who is here now—outlined so honestly, Senate Republicans are not permitting the Senate to pass a clean extension because they want the Senate to accept language altering 85 years of labor law and legal precedent.

I wish I understood why the policy objections of one company—Delta Airlines—mattered so much to so few and also mattered so much more than the

livelihood of thousands of American workers who have or will be furloughed.

Last year, the CEO of Delta made \$9 million. Whether that was a salary or salary plus options, I know not. Delta paid its top executives almost \$20 million. Yet it is fighting to make sure its employees cannot organize—they already had four elections, and in all four Delta has prevailed—for fear they may secure a few extra dollars in their paychecks.

At the same time, it is pushing for special interest provisions in the FAA bill. Delta is not shy. Delta announced it was abandoning air services to 26 small, rural communities—leaving many of them, obviously, without any air service. One only has to live in a small, rural community or a State such as mine to understand what that means and what the cost truly is.

Delta then had the gall to announce publicly it would seek EAS subsidies to continue this service. Maybe Mr. Anderson and his colleagues can forgo some of their own salaries to help subsidize the air service. That is not my business. Maybe they could use some of the millions of dollars they are collecting in a tax holiday windfall to pay for this service. That is not my business, but it is theirs, and it is shameful.

Let me be clear. House Republicans and their Senate allies have thrown nearly 4,000 FAA employees out of work already, stopped critical airport safety projects, hurt hundreds of small businesses, and gutted the Aviation Trust Fund—or began to—so Delta Airlines—that one company—doesn’t have to allow its employees to organize in a fair or timely manner, if they chose to.

The needs of one company should not, in any deliberative body, dictate the safety and soundness of our aviation system. We need to pass a clean extension that will get people back to work and businesses and their employees back to work and build out our airport infrastructure.

It is so simple to pass a clean extension bill. We have done it so often. We have done it 20 times. The one time where there was some policy attached was 2 years ago, when the House and the Senate totally agreed on what was in the extension, and it passed. But it is such a simple thing to do. By not doing it, it is holding up our whole process.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 2553

Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that, as in legislative session, the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 109, H.R. 2553; that a Rockefeller-Hutchison substitute amendment, which is at the desk, be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be read the third time and passed; and that the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

MR. HATCH. I object, Madam President.