

years as a result of the 2010 health care overhaul act. Now, [they are] bracing for another blow.

"We're concerned that any additional cuts to hospitals, whether through Medicare or Medicaid, will have a dramatic impact on hospitals and health care providers . . ."

The Illinois Finance Authority—all of these groups look at this situation and say: This makes our economy even worse. It is a self-inflicted, politically manufactured problem. It is a crisis which does not have to exist. Should we ignore our debt? Of course not.

Madam President, you know I have worked on this issue for a year and a half now with more specificity than ever in my career. I was on the deficit commission the President appointed. Then I stuck around afterwards as six Senators—the Group of 6, we called ourselves; it was not a very inspired name, but that is what we came up with: three Democrats and three Republicans—and we sat down for 6 months and hammered out an agreement among us to reduce our Federal deficit by \$4 trillion over the next 10 years, with a balanced approach that puts everything on the table—everything—revenue, entitlements, spending—everything.

We came to an agreement. We presented our agreement to the Senators just 2 weeks ago. Forty-nine Senators showed up at that meeting, Democrats and Republicans. It was amazing. Then we followed up and said: Are you ready to put your name on the bottom line? Will you support moving forward with this bipartisan way to deal with the deficit in a responsible way that does not endanger our economy and make us face bankruptcy as a nation?

We now have 36 Senators, Democrats and Republicans, who have signed up. That is a pretty good number. It shows that this is not an idea that we came up with that does not have legs. Sure, we are going to have to change it. We understand that. But look what happened. Democrats and Republicans sat down—no cameras, no reporters—and worked out a reasonable way to deal with the deficit and our Nation's debt.

What is better? Lurching from this crisis to another crisis 4 months from now, as Speaker BOEHNER suggests, or dealing with this in an honest, bipartisan way today?

Madam President, I can tell you what the American people want us to do—at least I think I know what they want us to do. They do not want us to endanger this economic recovery. They do not want us to kill jobs. They do not want us to hurt businesses. They want us to help this economy recover and create jobs. They want us to extend this debt ceiling so we do not see interest rates going up across America at exactly the wrong time. They certainly do not want to see us put in a position where we have to decide between paying Social Security recipients and our soldiers who are in combat. That is what the administration would face if this crisis that has been manufactured on Capitol Hill continues.

What they expect us to do is to earn our pay as Members of the House and Senate, to work hard to come up with a reasonable approach, and to be willing to give a little. It is the only way you reach a compromise. Compromise is the nature of this political process. Those who condemn it—and there are some who do, who say: Never give up, stick to your principles, never change—we are not going to get a solution. We have to be willing to work together to give and get this done.

Here is what I predict is going to happen soon.

I predict Speaker BOEHNER is going to call his bill on the floor of the House. We have told him in advance it is a nonstarter here. If it passes the House, it will come here, and it will likely be voted down. We will then propose an alternative.

Majority Leader HARRY REID has an alternative which basically extends the debt ceiling beyond next year so our economy has time to recover. It cuts spending by over \$2 trillion so we address our deficit. It does it with a list of spending cuts that every Republican has voted for so it is not controversial in substance. I think that is the best approach.

He creates a joint committee to deal with the long-term deficit. I have been involved in those, and I think we should. I think it is a good, balanced approach that solves our problem and gets us through this crisis. We are likely to vote on it either tomorrow or the next day. But we are down to 5 days. We are running out of time. We have to get this done.

I want to tell you, any Senator who comes to the floor and says defaulting on our debt and reaching the first point in our history where the credit reputation of the United States is in doubt is OK, it is a good political tactic, they do not understand the gravity of that decision and the impact it will have on businesses and families for generations to come.

This notion that we can pick and choose the checks we are going to send out in August when we are going to have 55 or 60 percent of what we need is going to put us in an impossible position. Deciding among all of the valuable, important functions of government which ones will not be funded—that is an impossible position for this President to be in. We cannot do that to him. We cannot do that to our government. We cannot do this to our country.

I hope that after the House votes today or tonight, whenever it may be, that we take up the measure quickly. Let's move this forward. Let's get this done. Let's avoid this crisis. Let's meet the responsibility we were elected to address.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. KLOBUCHAR). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. PRYOR. Madam President, I understand that we are in morning business and Senators are allowed to speak therein for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

A HOUSE DIVIDED

Mr. PRYOR. Madam President, our greatest Republican President, Abraham Lincoln, in his drive to end slavery, said "a house divided against itself cannot stand." With these few words, Lincoln is calling to us through the echoing halls of history. He is calling for us to put aside our differences and to become unified into one people, one Nation, one common purpose.

Mr. Lincoln recognized that the issue of slavery was tearing this great Nation apart and that it could not survive half slave and half free. Slavery was the great unfinished business of our Founders. The institution of slavery was so ingrained in the infant country's past and future that even Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison and Franklin could not disentangle it. I am not trying to equate carrying too much debt with slavery, please understand that, but the truth remains. A house divided against itself cannot stand.

This house, this Nation, this Republic, is divided against itself. Our Founders called their effort at establishing a new Nation "a great experiment"—and it has been. Nothing like it had ever been tried and America has been the unequalled success in all of world history. Truly, we are the envy of the world. We began as 13 weak and barely united States but quickly became the strongest country in the Western Hemisphere. About 70 years after we adopted the Constitution, we survived a deadly Civil War. All the while we grew in stature and in favor with other nations. Our economic power grew rapidly. American influence grew as we became the agent of democracy and capitalism for the entire world. Although our military power was slow to develop, we fought on the winning side in two world wars and we grew into an economic, military and cultural super power.

We are a Nation of immigrants, of many faiths, of many races and our national call to union is E Pluribus Unum. Out of many, one. Out of many States is forged one Nation. Out of many races is forged one people. Out of many, one. The Founding Fathers had to balance the agrarian interests of the South and West with the industrial and shipping interests of the North and East. They balanced small States and big States. They balanced regions dominated by the frontier with regions dominated by the old world. They balanced Catholicism and Protestantism and Judaism. They balanced English

culture with German culture with French culture. Out of many, one. Had previous generations of leaders not achieved oneness, we would not be, could not be, the great Nation we are today. The Senate was added to the Constitution as a compromise. Washington, DC, was placed on the banks of the Potomac as a compromise. States were added to the union as the result of compromise. In this sense, America's ability to find compromise has always been our pathway to greatness. Our Founders established this more perfect union with the clear-eyed knowledge that came from experience that a house divided against itself cannot stand.

Division leads to failure. To make our democracy work, we all must work together. We must acknowledge that we have differences of opinion and differing points of view, but we must commit to unity. The floor of the U.S. Senate is the marketplace for ideas and it is a window into democracy that is a living testimony to the greatness and diversity of our Nation. The floor of the U.S. Senate should not be a graveyard for ideas or innovation or promise. Campaigns should stop at the threshold of this chamber. What happens in this chamber is much greater than any single Senator's political fortunes, and it is much more important than a political party's fate at the next general election. We have a sacred responsibility to the people through the Constitution, and if we orient ourselves to the next presidential election, we are failing in our duty. The U.S. Senate, at its core, by its nature, is where decisions get made. We have our ideological battles here, that is certain, but this is where consensus should be achieved. The Senate should fuel the engine that propels us to a better future, not stall that engine.

All Americans should fully participate in our government. We should register to vote and serve on the jury. We must volunteer in the schools and pay our taxes. We must teach our children about our country, their country, and prepare them for their time to lead. We must tell them that our system of government is the best that man ever devised and that it works. It works very well if we allow it to work.

This moment in history is a day where we can show our children, as well as our Founding Fathers, that this is no longer a house divided. We can show the world that our parents instilled in us the value of *E Pluribus Unum*. America's best days lay ahead if we are mutually committed to that future. It is, however, not possible unless we set aside our differences and work together for that common goal. My fellow Senators, please heed the words of Abraham Lincoln and understand that there is truth of what he said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

FAA REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. BINGAMAN. Madam President, let me speak for a few minutes about the disappointment I have and I am sure many other colleagues have with the situation we find ourselves in with respect to the partial shutdown of the Federal Aviation Administration.

My colleague from Colorado, Senator BENNET, was on the Senate floor this afternoon and spoke eloquently about how this partial shutdown is affecting his State of Colorado. I wanted to talk briefly about the similar concerns I have for my State of New Mexico.

Frankly, some in this Congress, in my view, have lost sight of what they were elected to do in Washington. Aviation is a critical piece of our transportation infrastructure, a critical piece of our economy. Yet, for nearly a week now, the Congress has failed to extend the necessary authorizations to keep the Federal Aviation Administration doing the work that needs to be done.

It has been over 5 months since the Senate passed its reauthorization bill for aviation programs. That vote was overwhelming; it was 87 to 8. So this was not a partisan bill; this was a bill supported strongly by both Democrats and Republicans.

The bill included a number of programs important to my State of New Mexico and to the entire Nation, including the Airport Improvement Program that provides grants for the construction of runways, taxiways, which help to make airports safer. These projects also create hundreds of jobs in the construction industry in my State and tens of thousands of jobs in the construction industry nationwide.

One of the most important features of the Senate's bill relates to our air traffic control system. Our current system is universally recognized as being antiquated, inefficient, and increasingly it is recognized as being unsafe. The bill we passed out of the Senate dramatically accelerates the FAA's efforts to convert the air traffic control system to one based on satellites and global positioning systems, similar to the GPS many of us have in our cars. When implemented, NextGen—the name given to this improvement of the air traffic control system—will improve safety, will increase efficiency of operations, will reduce delays, and will save fuel and help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Thanks to the good work Chairman ROCKEFELLER and Ranking Member HUTCHISON in the Commerce Committee did, the Senate passed a good bill to reauthorize aviation programs. That was in February. Then in April, the House passed its own version nearly on a party-line vote. The House majority, unfortunately, chose to include partisan and divisive provisions in that legislation that were not appropriate in an aviation bill.

Let me give a little description of what those partisan and divisive provisions I am referring to are. There was

an editorial in the New York Times this morning that summed it up well. It says:

Last year, the National Mediation Board changed a rule to make it easier for airline and railroad workers to unionize. Until then, workers who did not vote in union representation elections were counted as "no" votes; after the change [this is the change by the National Mediation Board—its own rules] they are counted as abstentions. Pushed by the airline lobby, House Republicans passed a long-term FAA reauthorization bill that would have undone the rule change. The Senate's reauthorization bill, passed in February, maintained the rule.

In spite of this difference in the two bills, the Senate did appoint conferees, did begin working to resolve differences—as we should have—and working out the required compromise is never easy. Unfortunately, now the House has decided that in order to gain leverage over the Senate to accept the House anti-union provisions, there would not be any additional clean extensions of existing law.

We have had 20 extensions of existing law to just keep the Federal Aviation Administration operating while the House and Senate negotiate the final resolution of this larger bill. Unfortunately, the situation now is that the Congress's failure to extend the authorization one more time has shut down important aviation programs across the country, and 4,000 FAA employees have been furloughed and forced to go without pay. Across the Nation, important airport improvement projects are now on hold.

In New Mexico, \$26 million in funding for over two dozen projects has been stopped. These include a new firetruck for the airport in Roswell, runway projects in Raton and Santa Rosa, and snow removal equipment in Clayton and Vaughn. In Santa Fe, work on a vital new radar system has been stopped. In Albuquerque, progress has stopped on a \$10 million project to replace the airport parking apron.

What is particularly troubling to me is that the authority to collect the ticket tax has also been suspended. Why should this matter? This is the money that goes into the airport trust fund and allows us to continue to make improvements and maintain our airport infrastructure around the country. This is funding that is used to pay for safety and infrastructure projects at airports in my State and everywhere in the country. As I understand it, it amounts to about \$30 million a day being lost from that trust fund. At a time when we are being told the country is falling behind in its investments in basic infrastructure, this loss of funding is clearly going to have major impacts on airport projects down the road.

People also need to realize that the fact that the FAA is no longer able to collect the ticket tax does not mean people don't have to pay the full price they would be paying if the tax were being charged. The airlines, with very few exceptions, have announced they