

are going to continue to charge the full price for tickets and pocket the extra money themselves, instead of turning it over for infrastructure projects at our airports.

So here we are. It is simply, in my view, unacceptable for the Congress not to restore to the FAA the authority to collect airline ticket taxes and to resume normal operations.

Senator ROCKEFELLER has introduced a clean extension of the aviation programs. Whatever differences there are between the two bodies in provisions in the short-term extension are trivial compared to this \$30 million a day the Nation is losing in funding for our Nation's airport projects.

We all here in the Senate, in the Congress, and in the country, are focused on the need to extend the debt limit, and that is the most urgent need we face, but in addition to that we need to restore to the FAA the authority to resume its normal operations and to resume payments into the airport trust fund. To leave for an August break without having fixed the problem of the lack of FAA authorization as well would be seriously irresponsible.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the editorial from this morning's New York Times entitled "This Is Called 'Small' Government."

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the New York Times, July 27, 2011]

THIS IS CALLED 'SMALL' GOVERNMENT

What has happened to the Federal Aviation Administration in the last few days should remind everyone of the costs of the Republicans' obstructionism and their slash-and-burn budget games.

Taxes on airline tickets expired on Friday when the F.A.A. lost its operating authority, including the authority to collect taxes. Passengers are rightly furious at the nation's airlines, many of which are pocketing the difference. But the masterminds of this fiasco are the House Republicans who let this happen.

The F.A.A. has also had to furlough some 4,000 workers. Needed airport construction projects—to maintain runways, build new traffic control towers and upgrade other facilities—have been halted across the country. The only good news is that the air traffic control system is still working because traffic controllers are paid from the Aviation Trust Fund, which still has a positive balance.

All of this happened after House Republicans inserted a new provision into a routine bill to temporarily extend the F.A.A.'s operational authority. The provision would end \$16.5 million in federal subsidies to 13 airports in rural communities. The bill passed the House. But Senate Democrats balked, arguing that the right place for changing policy is in the regular F.A.A. reauthorization bill—noting that the temporary extension has passed 20 times since 2007 without any additional provisions.

"If we can't put an end to these extravagant subsidies, then we will never be able to rein in spending where really hard decisions are necessary," said Tom Petri, the chairman of the House aviation subcommittee, upon submitting the bill. Talk about pound foolish. When the F.A.A. lost operational au-

thority, it lost its ability to collect \$200 million in taxes a week. These taxes would have paid for the airport subsidies in about 14 hours. There is more going on here. As we have seen in many Republican-led states, an attack on "excessive" government spending is also often a bid to break labor unions.

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, they are counted as abstentions. Pushed by the airline lobby, House Republicans passed a long-term F.A.A. reauthorization in April that would have undone the rule change. The Senate's reauthorization bill, passed in February, maintained the rule.

Earlier this month, John Mica, the chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, told an aviation conference that adding the airport subsidy provision to the temporary bill to keep the F.A.A. running is "just a tool" to force the Senate to give in on the union issue.

Next time voters hear Republicans talking about taking a principled stand against government spending, they should keep this sorry and cynical tale in mind.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

THE DEBT CEILING

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I follow my colleague who mentioned our need to prevent default. The need we have—the reason we are here and why there will be a vote in the House and the Senate tonight—has to do with the need of our Nation to prevent default, and also, of course, the need to cut spending. Our problem is that we spend too much. Americans all around the country are calling in to Members of the House and Senate and saying: Hey, let's get things under control and let's cut the spending.

My friends on the other side of the aisle, I am happy to see with the proposals being brought forth, are beginning to understand what my constituents in Wyoming have known from the very beginning: Americans are not taxed too little, Washington spends too much. But the President seems to be more concerned about the next election than about the next generation of Americans.

I was astonished last week when the President was addressing the Nation and he talked about what his bottom line was in this whole debate. He said:

The only bottom line I have is that we have to extend this debt ceiling through the next election, into 2013.

This was the President of the United States saying this:

The only bottom line I have is that we have to extend this debt ceiling through the next election, into 2013.

Since 1962, the debt ceiling has been raised 74 times. On average, the debt ceiling is usually for about 8 months. But now the folks on the other side, and the President, are calling for the largest debt ceiling increase in history and it is designed to last a lot longer

than 8 months—almost for a year and a half, as the President wants it to go into 2013; and specifically, as he said, through the next election.

The President's Treasury Secretary has essentially said the same thing. He said:

We have to lift this threat of default from the economy for, you know, for the next 18 months. We have to take that threat off the table through the election.

Well, if the President and the Treasury Secretary get their way, they will be able to ignore the single biggest threat to our national security until after the next election. As the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has said: The greatest threat to our national security is the debt.

The President could have gotten what he wanted last week—which is an increase in the debt ceiling beyond the election—when the House passed its cut, cap, and balance legislation. I was one of the original cosponsors of that in the Senate. I was in favor of it, supported it, and continue to support that. Instead, the President issued a veto threat. He told Democrats in the Senate to kill it. After all, they are still the majority party.

The Senate Democrats, I believe tonight, will have the power to save our country's finances once again. They can do that by passing the Boehner plan—pass it through this body and send it to the President's desk for him to sign. Instead, the majority leader has said no Democrat—not one—will support this plan. It has what the President wants. It raises the debt ceiling. It lets us, as a nation, avoid default. But it doesn't take us beyond the election.

It is interesting. It would seem support by the Democrats for this plan would clearly signal their desire to continue working to rein in Washington's wasteful spending, to get our fiscal house in order. But that doesn't seem to be the signal the President wants to send. The Boehner plan is the only plan currently on the table that can get through the House of Representatives and protect us from default.

Republicans have put forward plan after plan. Democrats and the White House have done nothing but criticize from the sidelines. The White House Press Secretary has even said:

Leadership is not proposing a plan for the sake of having it voted up or down and likely voted down.

That is what he said. He said the Democrats have even sent a letter asking for a long-term debt increase. But how can we have a long-term debt increase if they have no plan to get there? The White House Secretary claimed recently the President's plan is well-known. He said:

There is no plan that has been offered, certainly in the last several months, about which more detail is known.

I say: Where are the details? I want to know how I could get this well-known plan and share it with my constituents back home in Wyoming. How

did the CBO score this plan that, according to the President's Press Secretary, is a plan about which so much detail is known? Where is it? What is the CBO score? Where is the text of it? How can we read it and bring it here and discuss or debate it?

These things don't exist—neither a CBO score nor a text—because the White House has continually refused to release a plan, even with pleas coming from Congress and from the media. I can understand why the President might be reluctant, since the time he last brought a budget to this body it was defeated 97 to 0. Not one Democrat voted in support of what the President had proposed—not one. No one supported the President's budget plan.

There is a Reid plan being proposed. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the Reid plan cuts about \$2.2 trillion from our budget over the next 10 years. But if you dig a little deeper, you find these so-called cuts are accounting gimmicks. The House Budget Committee looked at the Reid plan and their assessment was not very flattering. Let me quote from that assessment:

Reid's plan relies on the inaccurate assumption that surge-level spending in Iraq and Afghanistan is scheduled to continue over the next decade.

No one in America, and I would hope no one in the White House, believes that surge level spending in Iraq and Afghanistan is scheduled to continue over the next decade. But the plan endorsed by the President relies on such an inaccurate assumption. Why is he trying to mislead the American people? The Democrats are claiming to save money by cutting spending that was never, ever going to be spent in the first place. This is the strongest possible proof the White House is not realistically dealing with the situation and is not, in my opinion, serious about realistically and reliably cutting the debt.

In fact, even if you assume the Reid plan would work, it wouldn't cut spending fast enough to keep up with the spending the President is doing. The President wants to borrow at least \$2.4 trillion to get him through the election—to get him into 2013. But the last draft of the floor plan we are going to be asked to discuss cuts \$2.2 trillion over 10 years while raising the debt ceiling by \$2.7 trillion. It would take over a decade to pay back what this President wants to borrow over the next year and a half. So we would still be borrowing at a much higher rate than we are cutting. That is not responsible leadership. Responsible leadership would be to recognize the solution to our country's financial woes, and that solution is to avoid default, while consistently cutting spending and balancing our books the way that families do. That solution would require us to keep working until we get it right. That is the theory at the heart of Speaker BOEHNER's plan.

The President talks about wanting a balanced approach. That means dif-

ferent things to different people. When the President is talking about wanting more taxes, I think what Americans want is actually a balanced budget. Speaker BOEHNER will bring us one step closer to that balance by forcing a vote on the balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. I look forward to voting for a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution.

We live under a constitution in the State of Wyoming, and from the very beginning we have balanced our budget. As a result, we have excess money and scholarships available to all students to study at our universities and community colleges, because year after year we live within our means.

The President talked a bit about public opinion being important in this debate. Yet he is opposed to a balanced budget constitutional amendment. In a recent Sachs/Mason-Dixon poll, 65 percent of Americans say they support a balanced budget constitutional amendment. So where is the respect for that public opinion? The Boehner plan works because its authors have listened to the American people.

The White House refuses to seriously confront the problems facing our Nation, and Democrats are trying to shut down the only plan that can pass the House and save us from default. I am alarmed at their denial about how to solve these problems. The President must not veto America into default. It is time we pass a real plan that cuts spending and avoids default. We don't need to wait until midnight on August 1 or August 2. We can do it, and we should do it today.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended until 7 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each during that time; and further, that I be recognized at 7 p.m.

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

The Senator from West Virginia.

TOUGH FISCAL CHOICES

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I rise today to speak about the tough fiscal choices this body, this government, and our President now face. But before I say anything else, I wish to start off with a profound apology. I want to apologize to every West Virginian and all Americans for the terrible process they have been made to endure and witness. With 5 days before the August 2 deadline to raise the debt ceiling, this government faces yet another crisis of its own making. Yet it is not we who pay the price for our failures to govern, it is the American people. To the tens of millions of American families who work hard to take care of their fami-

lies, I can only imagine the anger and disgust they have at witnessing a broken government and a President and Members of Congress who can't seem to even agree sometimes on what day it is, let alone on how to solve the Nation's debt crisis.

The American people deserve better.

Some will say Washington is broken and that is the best we can do, but I do not believe that for one moment. Washington may be broken, but it will not break me, and you should not let it break you either. I came to fix things, not to make things worse. I came to solve problems, not to ignore them, and I came to worry about the next generation, not my next election.

I, for one, am willing to make the tough and painful decisions that will improve the lives of every West Virginian and all Americans for generations to come, regardless of what it means for my party or for the next election, and I know I am not alone.

After our beloved Senator Byrd passed away, I chose to run for the Senate for one simple reason: I saw the great challenges our Nation faced: exploding debts and deficits, our Nation's energy dependence, costly wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and a painful jobs and economic crisis, and I wanted to help make things better by bringing a little common sense to Washington. I knew we had to focus on rebuilding America and doing so meant making hard, politically difficult choices.

Some of my colleagues often remind me that fixing problems as complex as our debt crisis isn't easy. But with all due respect, it seems we make it harder than it needs to be. My friends, it doesn't need to be this way.

I did not come to Washington with the illusion that I could reinvent the wheel, but I did come to help balance the wheels and make the car run a little smoother.

Months ago, when I said I would not vote to raise the debt ceiling without a long-term fix, I thought this Congress and our President would be able to tackle the issue head-on and have it done by now. As I made clear on that day, the choices we make to address our debt now will determine whether the vital programs we all deeply care about, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, our veterans programs, education for our children, Head Start, are there for those in need and for the decades to come. However, instead of coming together months ago to focus and deal with the gravity of our debt, we delayed, and we continue to delegate.

While I will never question someone's motivations or their heart, we all have a right to question the strategies of our leaders and colleagues, whether they are Democrats or Republicans, because these strategies have once again led us to a crisis and the brink of a disaster. At a minimum, this entire process has, once again, fed a growing public cynicism that is corrosive to the very fabric of our government, and we all bear the responsibility for that.