

through how we take them through continuous education. You see, effectiveness is, in part, connecting with the people we are trying to teach. If we do that in the right way, we are going to be successful.

I am not trying to create the model in Washington and to say to the States and localities: Here is the only way you can do it. We are trying to give them the flexibility of the money, and let them design the programs they think will work. Again, with that, though, it requires us to let go of that power of accountability. There is no reason for Washington to be accountable for every K-12 system in this country. We can be a partner, and I think the appropriate role is a financial partner. But as to accountability, I do not want to be in Washington determining whether a school is a pass or a fail or whether a teacher is highly qualified. At best, it is arbitrary that we would come up with something.

I want to empower communities, I want to empower parents, I want to empower the business community to say: You determine success and failure. I want to empower principals and administrators: You determine whether teachers are qualified.

I do not want to sit in Washington and define how pharmacists who have lost their passion to work in a drugstore cannot shift over and become chemistry teachers in a high school because I have determined they are not qualified to do it. Yet, day in and day out, I would go into the pharmacy, and I would allow them to compound drugs for me. But they cannot go in a classroom and explain to kids how that works or, more importantly, how the interaction of compounds actually happens. That is not my role. It is not our role. Our role is to encourage, by making sure the tools are there for those closest to the problem to come up with solutions.

Well, what we did last week was a minor step in the right direction. I hope my colleagues will look at the legislation and will entertain cosponsoring it. I hope the Secretary of Education will look at it, even though we have had conversations that have continued since the first of the year, and we have a ranking member and a chairman engaged in the reauthorization of elementary and secondary education right now. I hope we influence their ability to get some type of an agreement.

But I think it is also important to understand that within the context of this issue are things that all of us know work. Let me give you a couple examples.

Senator KIRK introduced a bill on expansion of charter schools. Why is that important? It is not important because we simply want to create competition with the public model. Charter schools have become an incubator of new ideas, of new ways to teach.

In Houston, TX, some former Teach for America students created KIPP

Academy and immediately had such success that they exported KIPP Academy to New York. Their intent was to go from New York to Atlanta, and somehow they happened to stop in Northampton County, NC, in a little town called Gaston. It is in the middle of nowhere. But like all of North Carolina, it is beautiful. Its students are at risk. There is no economic driver in that county. But for some reason, KIPP stopped there and created a school. Now we have taken underperforming students and through KIPP all of them excel.

I can take you to Charlotte, NC, where KIPP finally found a home and was located next door to the elementary school. There is no way anybody can claim they draw from a different population. They draw from the same school neighborhood. Yet if we compare KIPP to the traditional elementary school next door, the performance of those students is off the charts. At some point, we have to look at it and say: This model works. How do we replicate it? But we are hung up in that one is public and one is charter.

Well, let me tell you, if we could replicate all of them to be KIPP, I would not care what we call them, and I would care less about how we funded them. I would only care about the outcome, how many students have the education foundation we need. In KIPP's case, it is almost 100 percent.

One big component of KIPP is the fact that they plug in to Teach for America graduates, teachers who enter the system knowing that for a period of time their agreement is they are going into at-risk areas; they are going in dealing with students "somebody" has deemed hard to complete the process. They go in with a different passion. They do not go in surprised with the makeup of the students in their classroom on the first day. They go in expecting this job to be tough, knowing their creativity and their innovation is going to be challenged.

What we have found so far is that for those Teach for America graduates, they end up staying longer than, in fact, the contractual period of time. They find it is much easier, but also much more satisfying, to take the most at risk and to make sure they have that education foundation that is needed.

That is incorporated into these bills. It is not just left to a simple line item that, in this particular case, I think, has been zeroed out in the President's budget. But it can be incorporated into this where we cannot only fund but we can expand Teach for America. With Senator KIRK's bill we can expand what KIPP is doing. We can challenge other individuals in other areas of the country to create KIPP-like models that work.

My challenge today is to assure all Members of the Senate and all Americans. Our kids deserve us to try. We have been dictating from Washington for decades, and we continue to see 30-

plus percent of our kids not reach that goal line. If they do, they do it in a way that is not necessarily advantageous to their future.

If we want our country to continue to prosper, if we want to continue to be the innovator of the world, then we have to create a pool, a generation of kids, where 100 percent of them are prepared to compete. I think that is exactly why Senator ALEXANDER stated he was willing to give up the rein of leadership, to be more integrally involved in the solutions that are crafted on this floor and in this Congress. That is why I said earlier, America has benefited because we have people such as LAMAR ALEXANDER here.

I am convinced that over the next several months, the reauthorization of elementary and secondary education will be front and center. I can only ask my colleagues that they spend the time looking at some of the suggestions that are on the table already. Authorship means nothing to me. It is outcome. Change the bill in a way that still stays within this framework—I will be a cosponsor of anything. Start to make Washington more dominant in the control of how the money is used or what the programs look like—I have been there. We have tried that. Not only does it not work, educators have told us it is increasingly more frustrating for them and they will drop out of the system.

We have to create a system that is a magnet for talent, a magnet for people who are as passionate as LAMAR ALEXANDER, something that gives us hope in the future that our kids have a better chance of succeeding than they have had over the past few decades. I think the Empowering Local Educational Decision Making Act of 2011 is a start, and I think the next generation is worth the investment of time on the part of our Members to look at this legislation and to get behind it.

I thank the Acting President pro tempore and yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

FEMA FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, first, I would like to talk a little about the upcoming FEMA bill. As I understand it, the House intends to send us a CR with FEMA funding only at the level of \$3.65 billion, which is a level that is completely inadequate to meet FEMA's needs. They intend to put \$1 billion in for 2011, which is more than is actually needed in 2011, but then they ask that it be paid for with \$1.5 billion, which is not the way mathematics is supposed to work.

The real problem is that the total amount of \$3.65 billion is inadequate given the terrible tragedies we have had over the last several months and years. We are still rebuilding from Katrina, the Joplin tornado was devastating, and, of course, the storms that hit the Northeast, including my beloved State of New York, were just awful. Just in New York State alone, it is estimated that cleanup costs will be closer to \$2 billion. So you can imagine that \$3.65 billion is not even close to enough.

The good news is what we intend to do here under the leadership of Majority Leader REID, which is to take the CR they send us and add to it the very bill that passed last Thursday night, which adds approximately \$7 billion to FEMA. That is the amount of money that is needed. It adds some money to the Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and other places the Governors of the States have told us are needed. And given the fact that 10 Republicans voted for it, we have every expectation that amendment will pass and we will send it back to the House. So the House should understand there will be a measure to adequately fund FEMA, and we will do that this week. Again, we have every expectation that the 10 Republican Senators who voted with us last Thursday night will cast the same vote on the same exact measures because the disasters in their States are not any less this week than they were last week.

BUDGET DEFICIT

I also wish to address the President's proposal on the budget deficit, particularly on the tax side, and the many arguments being tossed around by many of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle.

Yesterday, the President put forward a blueprint for the joint committee to consider this fall, and it included a very commonsense principle; that is, those very few among us who are fortunate enough to make over \$1 million a year should pay the same effective tax rates at the end of the day as middle-class households.

A number of Republicans rejected the President's plan before he even announced it. As soon as it was suggested that we should ask the wealthiest few among us to pay their fair share, many on the other side began labeling it class warfare. Apparently, they think they can slap that old label on the President's proposal and be done with it. But their refusal to address the proposal on the merits is revealing. They know they will lose any argument about the policy itself because it makes sense economically and because the American people support it. Even Republicans in the country—59 percent in a recent poll I saw—support the wealthiest among us paying a fair share and support not giving them the continued Bush tax breaks at a time when we have record deficits and we are asking everybody else to sacrifice.

This is, emphatically, not class warfare. It is not class warfare to fight for the middle class, that is for sure. It is not class warfare to say we need funding for roads and bridges and teachers and that the wealthiest among us should pay their fair share to do it. Let me ask a question, Madam President. Is it class warfare when Republicans advocate tax cuts for the wealthy? Do we call that class warfare?

The debate about the progressivity of the Tax Code has existed for over 100 years in this country, and there are different policy prescriptions. Most Democrats and most Americans believe the wealthy don't pay their fair share. That is not to begrudge the money they have made. There are a lot of wealthy citizens in my State, and I am proud of them. I am proud they made a lot of money. And many of them believe they should pay a fair share. It is not just Warren Buffett. It is not class warfare to ask that. It is not class warfare to advocate tax cuts for the wealthy or tax increases for the middle class. That is not class warfare. To try to call it this name is unfair.

Let me make a second point. We have a need to do this. The President is not proposing things such as the Buffett rule out of vengeance. He said yesterday: "It's not because anybody looks forward to the prospects of raising taxes or paying more taxes." But we do have a consensus that has been reached here—it is one of the few—that we should reduce the deficit. We all know we have to. There are two ways to do it. One is by cutting spending, and when we cut spending, it hurts middle-class citizens. Middle-class citizens need help to pay for college; wealthy people don't. So if you cut student loans or Pell grants or Stafford loans that go to the middle class, it is not going to affect wealthy citizens—they can afford college themselves—but it does affect the middle class. When you cut Medicare, it doesn't hurt the wealthy. They can afford any doctor or hospital they want. God bless them. They have earned their money, and they deserve that. We don't have a system that mandates everyone must have the same. But it sure hurts the middle class.

So the bottom line is very simple: If everyone has to pay their fair share so we can get the deficit down, the only way the wealthy pay their fair share is by making sure their tax rates are at least the same as average Americans, and perhaps they should be a little bit higher. So there is a choice.

We don't do this because we want to raise taxes and certainly not because we think the wealthy have gotten an unfair advantage. That is a different argument, and I don't believe that. I am proud when New Yorkers or Americans climb the ladder and make a lot of money due to hard work and their ideas. We do it because we don't want to lay off more teachers, because we don't want to see our infrastructure crumble, because we don't want to say

we can't create jobs, and yet we don't want to increase deficit spending. If we want to keep the deficit down but keep our schools good and our infrastructure good and our basic research good, the only way to do it is to ask the wealthy to pay a fair share. That is why we do it. And that is not class warfare; that is a policy debate which we welcome.

To sum up that point, either we ask big oil companies to give up special subsidies or we gut education or medical research. Either we ask the wealthiest Americans to pay their fair share or we will have to ask seniors to pay more for Medicare. We can't do both if we want to keep the deficit in line. America's middle class knows this. We know their median income is declining. We know the only place on the economic spectrum where incomes are going up is at the high end, and we know the right policy is to make those folks at the high end pay their fair share.

My colleagues are in for a rude awakening. I have talked to a couple of the people who study the polling data and what the average American thinks. And let me tell you, they think the phrase "class warfare" means war on the middle class. They think it means the wealthy get away with what they do not. So when our colleagues talk about class warfare, maybe it resonates with a few on the hard right among the very wealthy who don't want to pay any taxes at all—and Lord knows we have heard enough from them in this place—but to the middle class, it means the middle class is being beleaguered, not being helped, and even being attacked by circumstances beyond their control. So when we say the wealthiest should pay their fair share, middle-class Americans will not see that as class warfare. They will not. They will understand what we are doing.

I am so glad the President has decided to take this fight to the American people. It is a fight where we are on their side. That is what all my experience shows when I go around New York, and that is what the polling data shows. We are doing what is right for the future of this country and for our children and grandchildren.

So let's have the debate and let's dispel this idea that simply because we want the wealthy to pay a fair share, we dislike them and it is class warfare, that it is negative toward them. It is not. It is the right way for all Americans to make the pie grow in America and not have the various parts of America fight with one another because Medicare is being cut, because teachers are being cut and the deficit is going up and hurting our children and grandchildren.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I wish to thank my colleague from New York, and I would ask the Chair how much time is remaining in morning business on the Democratic side.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Nineteen minutes.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank the Chair.

DEFICIT REDUCTION

Mr. DURBIN. Let me thank my colleague from New York for his statement about the challenges we face. I have been involved for over 1½ years in deficit reduction talks on a bipartisan basis with the Bowles-Simpson Commission, the Gang of 6, now the Gang of 38—I believe was the last number of Democratic and Republican Senators who have publicly stated they are willing to move forward in a process based on the principles of the Bowles-Simpson Commission.

At a time when most Americans have given up hope that Congress will ever work on a bipartisan basis to solve our problems, I hope our effort will be viewed as positive and helpful to the supercommittee's work. We are doing everything we can to make sure they are successful and they have a very difficult assignment and a difficult timetable.

In the meantime, though, I understand, as the Senator from New York, my colleague who spoke earlier, that if we are serious about deficit reduction, it not only must involve cuts in spending, but it also must involve revenue and a serious look at the future of entitlement programs.

Currently, Social Security untouched will pay every promised benefit for the next 25 years with a cost-of-living adjustment; then it runs into trouble—a 22 percent cut in benefits, if we don't do something. The same cannot be said for Medicare. As strong as it is, as important as it is, it has about 12 years of solvency before we have to do something significant. Medicaid, which is a very critical health insurance program for millions of Americans, is threatened by State revenue declines and all the problems we have in Washington with our own deficit.

So these three entitlement programs need to be viewed in an honest context to keep them strong, to protect the basic benefit structure that underlies each of these bills and laws, and we need to do that as well. We need to put it all on the table. It is spending cuts. It is revenue. It is entitlement reform. It all has to come together. When the President says the wealthiest among us should be willing to help us through this crisis by sharing part of the burden, that is not unreasonable.

I have yet to hear the Republican plan for getting this economy moving forward. It appears they have no plan and are dedicated only to protecting those with the highest incomes in America. That is not a recipe for success. It may be somebody's ideas of a campaign platform, but it isn't a platform to build the economy.

I also heard this morning when the Republican leader came to the floor, Senator McCONNELL, and talked about the need to pass trade agreements. I

voted for trade agreements. I believe the U.S. workers and businesses can compete in this world successfully if the rules are fair and we are given a chance with the markets, and I voted for trade agreements in the past.

The Senator from Kentucky asked for us to pass more as soon as possible, but he did say something which caught my attention:

In a moment when 14 million Americans are looking for work—

Senator McCONNELL said—

it is indefensible for the White House to demand a vote on trade adjustment assistance as a condition for action.

I couldn't believe my ears when I heard that. Trade adjustment assistance is designed to put people who have lost their job because of trade agreements back to work. So it is totally defensible, totally consistent, and an important part of economic recovery.

The Alliance for American Manufacturing released a report this morning that 2.8 million jobs have been lost or displaced in America between 2001 and 2010 due to our growing trade deficit with China—2.8 million jobs. As we speak about expanding trade adjustment assistance so those who have lost their jobs to nonfree-trade agreement countries such as India and China, we are talking about putting Americans back to work. This should not be viewed as an obstacle, a diversion or inconsistent with economic recovery.

I couldn't follow the logic of the Senate Republican leader this morning when he was talking about trade adjustment assistance being indefensible at a time of high unemployment. It is totally defensible, totally consistent with putting Americans back to work.

For the record, since 2009, trade adjustment assistance has provided assistance to 447,235 workers in America who have been displaced due to trade agreements. It helps their families with income, with health care, with opportunities for retraining and education.

THE DREAM ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, it was 10 years ago when I introduced the DREAM Act. It is an important piece of legislation for thousands of people who are living in America who are literally without status, without a country.

The DREAM Act says, if one came to the United States as a child, if they are a long-term U.S. resident, if they have good moral character, if they have graduated from high school and they are prepared to complete 2 years of college or enlist in our military, we will give them a chance to be legal in America. That is what it says.

The young people who are affected by it are many times people who have never known another country in their lives. They got up at school, as Senator MENENDEZ has said so artfully, they pledged allegiance to the only flag they

have ever known. They sing the only national anthem they have ever known. They speak English and want a future in America. Yet they have no country. Because their parents brought them to this country as children, because their parents did not file the necessary papers, they are without a country and without a future. The DREAM Act gives them a chance—a chance to excel and prove they can make this a better nation.

The Obama administration recently made an announcement that I think is not only the right thing to do but paves the way for us to give these young people a chance.

We think we have 10 million undocumented people in America, and it is very clear the Department of Homeland Security is not going to deport 10 million people—that is physically impossible—nor should we. I certainly would be opposed to that notion. But what they are trying to do is to remove those people from America who are undocumented who pose a threat to our Nation.

They have been criticized by some. The deportations under the Obama administration are even higher than the Bush administration. They have tried to go after those with criminal records and those who are not going to be a benefit to the United States, and I think that is the right approach to use. But they said recently that they were going to make it clear that those eligible for the DREAM Act, these young people, of good moral character, graduates of high school, and those who are pursuing college degrees, are not going to be their targets. They have limited resources. They are going after the people who can threaten our country, those whom we don't want in the United States. I think that was the right thing to do, and I think that was a policy consistent with keeping America strong and building for America's future. But we need to do more.

In addition to having a sensible policy when it comes to deportation, we need a sensible immigration policy, and I think it starts with the DREAM Act.

I have come to the floor many times and told the stories about the young people who would be affected by the DREAM Act. Let me tell you two stories this morning that I think are illustrative of why this is morally important and important for us as a nation to consider as quickly as possible.

This wonderful young lady whom I have met is named Mandeep Chahal. She was brought to the United States from India 14 years ago, when she was 6 years old. Today, Mandeep is 20. She is an academic all-star. She is an honors premed student at the University of California, Davis, where she is majoring in neurology, physiology, and behavior.

Mandeep has also been dedicated to public service. In high school, she helped to found an organization known as One Dollar for Life, for poverty relief around the world. She was voted