

women across this country to work, for example, upgrading 150,000 miles of highways and roads, laying 4,000 miles of train tracks, restoring 150 miles of airport runways and installing a modern air traffic control system that no longer relies on World War II-era technology and will reduce travel time and delays.

Since the economic downturn began, more than 2 million construction workers have lost their jobs. That has happened all over the country. This legislation will send hundreds of thousands of those workers back to job sites to build \$27 billion worth of roads, bridges, and other important aspects of our infrastructure.

The plan would fund \$250 million worth of projects in my State and millions of dollars in the State of Delaware and other States. It would support about 3,300 badly needed jobs.

Overall, the Rebuild America Jobs Act would invest \$50 billion, taking our citizens off the unemployment rolls and putting them back to work, ensuring our Nation has top-notch infrastructure once again.

It will also invest \$10 billion to create an infrastructure bank that would leverage public and private capital to fund a wide range of long-delayed projects.

It will do all this without adding one penny to the deficit. Instead, it would require millionaires and billionaires to contribute their fair share—those whose incomes are netting over \$1 million. They would be asked to pay a surcharge of less than 1 percent—sevenths of 1 percent, to be exact—to get this Nation's economy back on track.

Americans overwhelmingly support the Democrats' plan to invest in roadways, runways, and railways. Seventy-two percent of the American people support the Rebuild America Jobs Act.

I don't know if I have been to Jonesboro, AR. I had a case that took me all over that State on one occasion. But a man in Jonesboro, AR, is quoted in last week's *Time* magazine. "The Return of the Silent Majority." I believe Drew Ramey qualifies for that. This is what he told *Time* magazine:

I used to think I was a libertarian. . . . But I like my roads now. I like my public services.

That was Drew Ramey from Jonesboro, AR. He speaks for millions and millions of Americans, Americans of all political persuasions. Even 54 percent of Republicans believe a world-class economy should have world-class roads and bridges. They agree with what we are trying to do.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and labor union AFL-CIO rarely agree on anything, but they agree on this. They agree we should pass the Rebuild America Jobs Act to improve the woe-filled state of America's infrastructure. It is not only labor and business groups but transit officials, mayors, and three-quarters of the American people support our plan—76 percent.

I could quote one dozen of my Senate Republican colleagues who have sup-

ported aspects of this in the past. Why aren't they lining up to support our proposal? Two basic reasons. One, Republicans are determined to see President Obama fail, even if it means Americans fail with him—sad but true.

My colleague, the Republican leader, said his No. 1 goal in this Congress is to defeat President Obama. They would rather see Americans continue to struggle, as I have outlined, to find work than work together with the President and with us.

Second, Republicans are more concerned with protecting millionaires and billionaires than they are willing to work with us to put 14 million people back to work.

I heard on the radio this morning, on National Public Radio, that during the Bush years, we lost 8.6 million jobs. We have only gotten a little over 2 million of those back—2½ million, frankly. It wasn't long ago that a President who was in office for 8 years could boast, if he wanted to, about creating 23 million jobs.

That is what Republicans have given us. They refuse to ask the rich to contribute a tiny fraction more to secure our economic future, even if it costs more jobs.

In recent days, Republicans have shown new interest in the gulf between rich and poor that has motivated thousands to occupy parks across the country and make their voices heard. Apparently, they believe America's staggering income inequality makes a good talking point.

Yet while Democrats fight for jobs for the middle class, Republicans fight for tax breaks for the 1 percent of Americans who don't need our help.

I will bet if we could ask these very rich people would they be willing to give seven-tenths of 1 percent more to create millions of jobs, most of them would say yes. Why aren't my Republican colleagues supporting this simple, commonsense legislation?

I say to my Republican colleagues that I hope they will work with us. We want to work with them. If we can do something good, there is a lot of good will to go around. But we have to make sure the speeches we have heard from some of our colleagues about creating jobs amount to doing something about it. We have not seen it yet.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period of morning business until 4:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Hawaii is recognized.

Mr. AKAKA. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. AKAKA pertaining to the introduction of S. 1763 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

DEMOCRATIC INACTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, it is no secret that Congress isn't winning any popularity contest these days. Americans are fed up with lawmakers who are either focused on the wrong thing or determined to block any serious reforms that would actually get at the root of the problems we face. That is why Republicans have been focused not only on legislation which we think has a good chance of jump-starting private sector job creation in this country but which also has a good shot at actually becoming law. Put another way, since taking back the majority this year, Republicans in the House of Representatives have focused not only on legislation which avoids the economic missteps of the previous 2½ years of Democratic control but legislation which also has a good shot of making it through a Democratic-led Senate.

You would never know it from listening to the President, but there has actually been a significant amount of bipartisan work that has been going on in Capitol Hill these days. House Republicans have passed bill after bill—many of them with solid bipartisan support—that would help spur private sector job creation and would help get this economy moving again, but the Democrats who have run the Senate for the past 5 years have ignored virtually all of it. Senate Democrats have decided it isn't in the interest of their party for Congress to get anything done right now. They have adopted a strict strategy of inaction. They simply won't take "yes" for an answer.

The contrast between Republicans who run the House and Democrats who run the Senate couldn't be starker. Since taking over the House this year, House Republicans have searched for areas of common ground and then invited Democrats who run the Senate to take them up and pass them and send them on down to the President for a signature. Almost every single time, Senate Democrats have said no.

House Republicans now count more than 15 pieces of legislation that would help us chart a very different path from the one the President and his Democratic-controlled Congress have charted over the past few years. This is legislation that would unlock America's energy resources, cut back on excessive regulations that are holding back job creation, and enable businesses, such as Boeing, to make their

own decisions about how and where to expand.

Just last week, the House passed a bill to get rid of an IRS withholding tax on businesses that do work for the government. More than 400 Members of the House voted for this bill, including 170 Democrats. Here is how one prominent Democrat described this bill:

The repeal of this requirement will free up small businesses' cash flow, increasing their ability to add jobs and to bid on new projects.

Republicans support this legislation. Democrats support this legislation. The President included this legislation in his own jobs bill, and he supports the bill that passed the House last week. There is no reason the Senate shouldn't take it up right now. This is one small thing we can do right now to reduce the burden on employers across the country. We came together to help them earlier this month by passing free-trade bills. Let's build on that success and pass this bill the job creators are telling us will help protect and create jobs.

Like Senate Democrats, the President may think he benefits from the appearance of inaction in Congress. That is why he is running around the country reminding people how bad the economy is instead of urging Democrats who run the Senate to work with Republicans who run the House. But with all due respect to the President, the American people already know the economy is in bad shape. That is not news to anybody. They do not need the President to tell them that. They live it. What they need is for the President to get his party to agree to something that helps.

I know Democrats will argue that our proposals for job creation wouldn't be their first choice. My response is that the Democrats had 3 years to do something about jobs and the economy. The President's signature jobs bill cost nearly \$1 trillion, and 2½ years later there are 1½ million fewer jobs in this country than on the day that legislation was signed. So why don't we try a different approach? Let's try an approach that actually takes into account the concerns of struggling business owners who are ultimately going to lift us out of this jobs crisis. They have told us what they want. It is not a mystery what we need to do to help these folks create jobs. Temporary fixes and more stimulus bills isn't it.

So our message is this: The Democrats in Washington need to start taking "yes" for an answer. Republicans have put forward more than a dozen concrete proposals to spur job creation in this country that avoid the economic mistakes Democrats made over the past few years. We have done the hard work of legislating and looking for areas where the parties overlap on the issues. It is time for the President to signal to Democrats in Congress that it is OK to work with us.

Everyone knows the economy is in bad shape. What Republicans are say-

ing is that higher taxes and more government spending isn't the way to help it. Everyone knows the Federal Government in Washington is spending way too much money, money it doesn't have. What Republicans are saying is that the solution isn't to spend even more. Everyone knows that if the two parties are going to come together and act, we need to design legislation that appeals to both sides, and that is exactly what Republicans are doing.

It is time to put the political playbook aside and actually take action. Republicans in the House are doing their job. It is time for the President and Senate Democrats to do theirs.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Alabama.

MINIBUS APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I thank the Republican leader for his comments and would just say that the time we can borrow from the future to spend today in order to create some sort of sugar high that creates jobs is past. We have tried that. The debt has now reached a level where the debt itself is a threat to our economy. It is a cloud over our economy. It is slowing growth and job creation. I truly believe that. We need to move out of these difficult financial times we are in, but I think the debt itself now is a threat to us.

I wish to speak about the minibus appropriations bill that is before the body and its effect on the budget we have. As the ranking Republican on the Budget Committee, I do believe it is my responsibility to present, as I am able, a straightforward, honest figure about the spending bills that come before our Senate.

H.R. 2112 is the first of several minibus bills that apparently will be used in lieu of the normal appropriations process. This minibus is so named because it contains three appropriation bills put in one—not one as we normally see before the Senate: the Agriculture bill, Commerce-Justice-Science, and the Transportation and Housing bill, all cobbled together in one.

The Democratic majority contends this package will save taxpayers money, but this is just more Washington accounting. We have crunched the numbers and discovered that these bills will not cut spending but will actually increase spending by \$10 billion over last year. So I wish to take a moment to explain because this is very important. We had an agreement that we would begin the smallest of reductions this year in spending—not nearly enough, but we reached that agreement, and we should honor that at least. So this is the first appropriations bill the Senate has considered after the discretionary spending caps were established as part of the recent debt limit negotiations.

The Budget Control Act, as you re-

member, was passed to raise the debt ceiling. As an exchange for agreeing to raise the debt ceiling, as President Obama asked, Congress insisted that there be some curtailment of spending so we wouldn't hit the debt ceiling again so soon. So the Budget Control Act, as the bill was pretentiously named in August, requires that discretionary spending be brought down this year from \$1,050 billion to \$1,043 billion in fiscal year 2012, an alleged total spending reduction of a paltry \$7 billion throughout the entire year. Presumably, the other \$6 billion that was required to be saved under this agreement will be saved in other bills to come before the Congress. We haven't seen them yet.

Does the bill that is before us move us toward even this minor goal? That is the question. The majority party says it does. They contend that the bill, the minibus, spends \$128 billion—which is \$1 billion less than last year when it was \$129 billion—a reduction of less than 10 percent, and they are very proud of this. But, remember, as an aside, nondefense discretionary spending alone in the first 2 years of President Obama's Presidency went up 24 percent. So to take a \$1 billion reduction is basically to hold in place this surge in spending at a time when this Nation has never, ever faced such a severe debt threat to its future.

Going through the bill and thinking it through, the Budget Control Act also created a new category of spending. The Budget Control Act, if you remember, was cobbled together in the dead of night and brought up on the floor on the eve of a financial crisis and it was demanded that it be passed, and hardly anyone had a chance to read it. Unknown to most of us, it allowed spending above the \$1,043 billion limit for disaster assistance. The debt limit deal provided an allowance for disaster spending equal to the average of the 10 prior years of disaster spending, which can be assessed or spent simply by providing the proper words in the appropriations bills that come forward across the floor, as these three do. But the majority contends this money should magically not be counted when you decide how much is spent by the bill. Why? Well, it is a disaster, and disaster spending doesn't count. Don't you know?

As amended on the Senate floor 2 weeks ago, the bill now contains \$3.2 billion in new spending above the caps for disaster relief, a further increase of 20 percent to the disaster assistance. Two additional amendments were adopted last week adding to the amount that the committees had produced as disaster assistance.

While there are arguments that the \$3.2 billion should not be counted as an expenditure, the CBO, the Congressional Budget Office, our official scorekeeper, includes it as an expenditure. It is included as an expenditure in the CBO score, \$3.2 billion. No one has challenged them because it appears they are plainly correct to count the