

much out of a bigger income that a 40-year-old would get.

So that is where we need to go with the Social Security cost-of-living adjustment. But in the so-called supercommittee, which was not able to come to an agreement, there were many in the supercommittee, particularly Republicans, particularly sort of ultra-conservative politicians who do not much like Social Security to begin with, wanted what is called the chained CPI. The chained CPI. They called it a technical fix. But it is really a regressive tax increase that would cut senior citizens' cost-of-living adjustment.

They did the chained CPI because it would save Social Security money. Well, to save Social Security money, what does that mean? It means you are taking money from benefits, especially for low and middle-income seniors, which is most of them. Those are people who rely on Social Security for most of their income.

Their chained CPI would mean the annual benefits for a typical 65-year-old would be \$136 less. Over time, a typical 75-year-old would receive \$560 less a year, and at 85 they would receive \$1,000 less a year, and at 95, as more seniors live to that age, when they need their benefit, the cut is \$1,400 a year. You know, that may not be much money for my colleagues, but it is a lot of money if you are a senior living on a fixed income.

We know how to balance this budget. We did it when the Presiding Officer and I were in the House of Representatives. We did it with a Democratic President and a Congress that at least would go along with him and did not draw these lines in the sand and make signed pledges to lobbyists. They are signing pledges to lobbyists, saying: I will not do this; I will do not do that, instead of thinking for themselves and signing a pledge only to the Constitution of the United States of America.

We knew how to get to a balanced budget. We can do this. We did it in the 1990s. We got to a balanced budget without reducing the cost-of-living adjustment, without turning Medicare over to the insurance industry. You know, to me there are some radical Members of the House of Representatives, there are some in the Senate, who want to see Social Security turned over to Wall Street, let them run it; Medicare over to the insurance companies, let them run it.

When President Bush wanted to privatize Social Security in 1995, the Presiding Officer was in the House of Representatives. Imagine if we had gone along with President Bush's idea to privatize Social Security. Imagine what would have happened. We know what happened to people's 401(k)s. Imagine what would have happened to the monthly Social Security payments.

The government, as much as people criticize it, has never failed once to pay a Social Security check on time. It never failed to pay it at all. Since 1937, when Social Security paid out its first

lump sum, I believe, or death benefit, and in 1940 when Social Security started paying monthly benefits, it never failed to pay, never paid late. So we know how it works.

If we had turned it over to Wall Street, who knows what would have happened. If we had turned Medicare over to insurance companies, as the Ryan proposal over in the House wants to do and as 40 colleagues here want to do, who knows what would have happened. We know it would not be Medicare the way we are used to it. We know it would not be Social Security the way we are used to it or the Medicare that serves the American public or the Social Security that serves the American public. Those two programs, if lifted 75 years ago—it was for the poorest, lowest income, the most indigent part of our population, seniors. It reduced the poverty rate dramatically so that seniors are no longer the poorest demographic of our population. Regrettably, children are, and we need to do better than we have done there.

Mr. President, it is clear that some of these radical proposals to privatize Medicare and turn it over to the insurance companies, privatize Social Security and turn it over to Wall Street, to do this chained CPI that will reduce the cost-of-living adjustment, because some egghead in some think tank in Washington, probably funded by Wall Street and insurance companies, thinks it is a great way to extract a few more dollars from seniors and do whatever they do with more dollars in the Treasury—it is pretty clear what we need to do to get a balanced budget, and it is pretty clear what we should not do. We can all work together and get to that point.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### AFRICAN MEETING HOUSE

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, the African Meeting House in Boston is one of the great landmarks of American freedom, as important to understanding our history as Faneuil Hall and Bunker Hill.

Not only is it the Nation's oldest black church building but throughout

much of the 19th century it also served as the unofficial headquarters of the movement to abolish slavery in America. And on December 6—its 205th anniversary—the African Meeting House will reopen its historic doors after a \$9 million restoration project to preserve the place where giants like William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass once thundered against the evil of human bondage.

It was in the Meeting House basement where William Lloyd Garrison formed the New England Anti-Slavery Society in 1832. Garrison predicted that the principles set forth by the Society would "shake the nation by their mighty power." Indeed, they did, because they were, in fact, the same principles embodied in the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and the other founding documents of our country. The Meeting House is a reminder of the struggle which was inevitable because slavery was written into our Constitution before brave Americans—both white and black—shed blood and spoke powerful words to ensure that it was at last written out of that founding document.

Maria Stewart, an African-American woman William Lloyd Garrison admired greatly, took Garrison's argument further, insisting in a series of speeches at the African Meeting House that under those founding documents, women were entitled to the same rights as men. "It is not the color of the skin that makes the man or the woman, but the principle formed in the soul," she said in one of her speeches in 1833. "Brilliant wit will shine, come from when it will; and genius and talent will not hide the brightness of its luster."

That was never as true as when Frederick Douglass delivered "A Plea for Speech in Boston" at the African Meeting House in 1860 after an anti-slavery meeting elsewhere in the city had been disrupted by a mob. "No right was deemed by the fathers of the Government more sacred than the right of speech," Douglass said. It is "the great moral renovator of society and government," he said. Slavery itself could not survive free speech. "Five years of its exercise would banish the auction block and break every chain in the South," he said.

Tragically, it ultimately required a war to resolve the great contradiction at the heart of our democracy. And with the coming of the Civil War, the African Meeting House joined the war effort, hosting rallies to recruit an all-black regiment of black soldiers. The result was the legendary 54th Massachusetts Infantry made up of volunteers from as far as Haiti, led by Colonel Robert Gould Shaw—the regiment and its commander both immortalized in monuments, literature and, of course, the award winning film *Glory*.

Mr. President, I was proud to work with Governor Deval Patrick and the Massachusetts congressional delegation to get \$4 million in Federal grants

for the \$9 million renovation of the African Meeting House. But few people have worked harder to make the renovation and rededication a reality than Beverly Morgan-Welch, the executive director of the Museum of African-American History. She has spent more than a decade spearheading the project, and I congratulate her for all her efforts on behalf of the Museum and the Meeting House and for the decades she has spent telling the unique and powerful story of African-Americans. It is an inspiring story about those whose spirits would not be broken by slavery, those who found ways to create families and communities under unimaginably brutal conditions, and those who managed—against all odds—to escape to freedom.

The African Meeting House reminds us that America has come a long way in making good on what Dr. King called “the promissory note” of our democracy—the right to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” to all our citizens. It is a testament to the great strides we have made in outlawing the racial injustice that tainted the ideals of American society and helped make possible the election of our first African-American president and, in Massachusetts, our first African-American governor.

But the African Meeting House also reminds us of the work and the struggle that continues today. If we are to be fully emancipated from the consequences of slavery, we must understand its history, which played out so eloquently, so gallantly and so courageously at the African Meeting House.

#### DEFENSE LEGISLATIVE FELLOW PROGRAM

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I rise to recognize the Defense Legislative Fellow Program and honor the fellows whom I have come to know well during their service in my office since 2009. These individuals have been among our Nation’s best and brightest and they come to Congress each year to impart their knowledge to Members and their staffs and leave with a better awareness of the political process and the tireless and often unheralded work that congressional staff undertake each and every day. In the past 2 years I have had the pleasure of having three defense fellows work in my office: LTC Brooks Tucker, U.S. Marine Corps; MAJ Vaughan Byrum, U.S. Army; and MAJ Brett Robinson, U.S. Air Force.

As a testament to their abilities, MAJ Vaughan Byrum, a 14-year Army officer, prior enlisted soldier, and veteran of the two deployments to Iraq, is now serving as one of a handful of promising and capable officers representing the Army in the Senate Liaison Office, and Major Robinson is completing his tenure in my office and preparing for another demanding assignment in the Washington, DC, area. As an officer in the Marine Corps Reserve, LTC Brooks Tucker started as a fellow

in my office in 2009, just when I was assigned a spot on the Senate Armed Services Committee. He has served on both my personal office and Veterans’ Affairs Committee staffs, and he has been a tireless advocate for North Carolina’s veterans and Active-Duty families and has been the critical lynchpin in my efforts to help the service-members and families who were impacted by contamination while serving at Camp Lejeune.

I want to express my gratitude to all three of these defense fellows for their service to the U.S. Senate and the people of North Carolina.

Major Byrum came to my office after completing a tough and demanding tour of duty in Baghdad, training and mentoring the provincial police and assisting with the critical transition from coalition to Iraqi responsibility and control. Like many combat veterans whom I have met over the years, Major Byrum is the epitome of professionalism, possesses a warm sense of humor, and conducts himself with humility and impeccable bearing. A graduate of North Carolina A&T University and a leader in the Reserve Officer Training Corps, Vaughan has a heart as big as his linebacker frame. He is fondly remembered by my staff, who went out of their way to welcome him back to the Senate after an interim assignment serving in the Pentagon. His can-do attitude and self-effacing demeanor will serve him well as he works with Senators and staff in the months ahead. I know his wife Andrea and daughter Victoria are very proud of him. I realize the Byrum family has made numerous sacrifices and endured lengthy separations, and they, like so many others in the military, have borne that burden quietly, with courage and grace.

Major Robinson has worked diligently in my Washington office for the past year and ably served the people of North Carolina. Before joining the Senate, Major Robinson served as the special operations program manager for the Air National Guard overseeing the special operations budget supporting over 1,000 personnel and 9 aircraft. As a traditional Air Guardsman, he serves as a C-130 pilot with the Pennsylvania Air National Guard. Prior to his recent assignments in Washington, DC, Major Robinson completed combat deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan and garnered operational experience on the African Continent, Europe, and Asia. A distinguished graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy, he has served as a tactics officer, pilot, and flight commander and is the recipient of numerous personal decorations for meritorious service over his 13 years in uniform.

His tireless work and patient manner has not gone unnoticed, whether it be helping a Vietnam combat veteran receive a long overdue decoration for valor, offering operational perspectives on air operations in Afghanistan and Libya, or working in concert with mili-

tary commanders and civilian leaders in North Carolina to address veterans’ needs.

And to Jori, his wife, who is also an Air Force officer, thank you for your support and sacrifice as you balance the demands and confront the challenges of life in service to this Nation. I enjoyed meeting you and your sons, Grayson and Kiernan, and I know Major Robinson couldn’t do what he does without your love and support.

I have gotten to know Major Robinson and Major Byrum quite well in the past 2 years. For men with so many rich life experiences and career accomplishments to be proud of, they truly epitomize the moniker “quiet professional” and exude a measured demeanor, consistent competency, and genuine modesty that has made them trusted advisers to me and my staff and garnered our admiration and affection. In sum, they are superb examples of the finest military in the world.

From interns in my office to constituents in the State, to all of my staff in North Carolina, Major Byrum and Major Robinson have impressed us at every turn and succeeded in educating us about the honor, tradition, and sacrifices made every day by our service men and women overseas, especially those of the National Guard.

Thank you, MAJ Vaughan M. Byrum and MAJ Brett B. Robinson, for your distinguished year of service to the people of North Carolina and for your continued commitment to protecting our Nation and the prosperity of all Americans.

#### MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

S. 1917. A bill to create jobs by providing payroll tax relief for middle class families and businesses, and for other purposes.

#### REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. LIEBERMAN, from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, without amendment:

S. 384. A bill to amend title 39, United States Code, to extend the authority of the United States Postal Service to issue a semipostal to raise funds for breast cancer research (Rept. No. 112-97).

#### EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. KERRY for the Committee on Foreign Relations.

\*Mari Carmen Aponte, of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of El Salvador.

Nominee: Mari Carmen Aponte.

Post: El Salvador.

(The following is a list of all members of my immediate family and their spouses. I