

our laws and shouldn't insist they be enforced at a time when we have almost 9 percent unemployment makes no sense to me. We need to get American workers working, not imported workers taking jobs from Americans. It is that simple.

We have to protect our legitimate national interest. If you want to have open borders, I am willing to discuss that and say we should have totally open borders. But if you don't—and no nation in the world does, to my knowledge—then you must create an immigration system that serves your national interest and creates jobs for American citizens wherever possible.

America's \$15 trillion debt is destroying jobs and confidence in the economy. The debt itself is the largest we have ever seen. The annual deficit is the largest we have ever seen. It dwarfs any deficits we have ever had before, and it is continuing year after year.

President Bush, in his last year in office, had the biggest deficit he ever had—\$450 billion. It was one of the largest deficits in the history of the Republic. President Obama's first year in office saw a \$1.4 trillion deficit. It has been \$1.3 trillion or more for the last 3 years.

This year, CBO was predicting the deficit would come in at a tad under \$1 trillion—\$970 billion. But if we pass this tax holiday, we will add \$200 billion to the debt just like that. So next year, we will be at \$1.1-plus trillion, if the Congressional Budget Office's projections are true.

This is a serious matter. The debt is a threat to us. We have to quit running up the debt. We have to quit borrowing so we can spend. That is all this tax holiday is—the government borrowing the money so people don't pay into their pension plan—Social Security. I am uneasy about that. It weakens the moral component of Social Security and it clearly adds to our debt. Social Security is on an unsustainable course. This bill would do nothing to fix the unsustainable course of Social Security. It says we don't put in the money we have been putting in every year for the last 60 years, I suppose. How can that do anything but weaken Social Security? And it absolutely increases our debt and will show up on the score by the Congressional Budget Office.

I am the ranking Republican on the Budget Committee. It is so painful; I would love to be able to support—and I won't say I won't support—this tax holiday. But it is not sound policy in the long run for America. We can't keep chasing after and borrowing money to spend, because the debt is so large. We now have a debt equal to 100 percent of GDP, our gross debt. We have never had anything like this before.

So it is time, indeed, for a middle-class agenda, an agenda that helps and strengthens this country. We don't need more dishonest spending, politicians promising favor, promising to give people something the government doesn't have to give, spending money

we don't have, to try to buy votes with it. We don't need any more of that. The net beneficiary of all this seems to have been the political class, not the middle class.

So what do we need to do? A good, sound program means creating jobs through the private sector, putting a stop to crony capitalism and favoritism, producing more American energy, and making our government leaner and more productive. That is good for the economy: creating a long-term debt reduction plan so that every investor and businessperson and American citizen will say, well, we are on a path now that is sustainable, not on a path that is unsustainable—as every economist has told us; adopting a globally competitive Tax Code, a Tax Code that enhances investment in America, enhances expansion in job creation, not one that inhibits growth and job creation.

We need to confront illegal immigration at the border and at the workplace and serve the national interests. We need to uphold the rules of law in trade and quit acquiescing to those who cheat and manipulate trade rules to their advantage. I don't believe we can sustain that over a long period of time. I do believe that has hammered jobs and manufacturing in America.

We need to eliminate unwise and damaging regulations. Any burden placed on individual Americans or businesses in America that does not pay for itself in benefits should never be imposed. We have too much in that category. Finally, delivering to the good people of this country the honest and responsible government and budget they deserve.

The sad fact is, we have now gone 961 days without a budget. I think that shows the irresponsibility of this Congress. I was disappointed when the Democratic leader in the Senate said it would be foolish to even attempt to bring up a budget this year, and he was not going to do it for the second year. This is really, really dangerous; a country that is suffering the greatest debt and deficits we have ever had, to not have a budget is utterly and totally unacceptable.

I can't imagine a party wanting to be the leader of the Senate that will not even bring to the floor a budget, as required by statute, required by law. The House passed one. They passed a historic budget, a budget that would have altered the debt course of America, put us on a sound path. The Republican leadership in the House summoned their courage and produced a budget that would reduce spending, alter the taxes in America in a way that would create more growth, and brought it forward.

So Senator REID thought he was clever. He knew Democrats wouldn't vote for it because it would actually cut spending, and he brought it up so it could be voted down. But over 40 people voted for it.

I brought up at the same time President Obama's budget—the most irre-

sponsible budget ever submitted, one that would increase taxes but increase spending more and increase debt more than if we didn't have that budget. So I brought it up and said: Well, let's vote on the President's budget. Zero votes, 97 to 0, against that budget.

We need to be sure the people who run this country understand that the American people are not happy with us. How can they be happy? We are borrowing 40 cents of every dollar we spend. We are on an unsustainable debt course, and we don't even have a budget and refuse to bring up one. It is just unthinkable.

We will end up in the last of this session heading into Christmas with some conglomerated-together, massive omnibus bill, a last-minute tax holiday bill, and somehow we will muddle forward and continue spending for the government so it will not close down. But all of this should have been done months ago. There is no reason it has to be held to the last minute except it gives the leader more power to manipulate, and it gives Members of Congress less opportunity to know what is in it. It gives the American people less opportunity to know what is in it.

So I am not happy. I don't think the American people are. I think they are rightfully disappointed with us. Somehow we have to get this country on the right track. It will require tightening our belts. We cannot continue to borrow and spend at this rate.

A lot of people are going to be disappointed that things they hoped to receive they will no longer be able to receive. But the country will not sink into the ocean. It will not. This country is strong. All we have to do is do what they are doing in New Jersey and doing in Alabama, beginning to do in some of the other States that have been deeply in debt, do what Senator WARNER did as Governor of Virginia: manage the economy and balance the budget. I appreciate his leadership in the Senate to try to produce something worthwhile for the Nation.

So we can do better, and we have to do better, and the American people are entitled to it.

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

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

AGRICULTURE

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I know we are all anxious to reach a conclusion on significant legislation that is pending. It determines many things important to Americans and it creates the opportunity for Members of the Senate and the House to spend a little

time at home during the holiday season. I am reminded how blessed I am this holiday season to return home to a rural State, where family values and community traditions run deep. There is no tradition more important to us than how we pass on, from one generation to the next, the workings on a family farm.

I am worried these rural traditions are under attack by Washington, DC. In September, our Department of Labor proposed new rules that would ban youth under the age of 16 from participating in what are many common farm-related tasks such as rounding up cattle on horseback, operating a tractor or cleaning out stalls with a shovel and wheelbarrow. I am sure there are many 15- and 16-year-olds who would be happy not to do that work, but it is important work, and it is a way fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, grandparents, work side by side with family members.

One of the things I care a lot about is agriculture. That matters to us in places such as Kansas because that is the economy of our communities. But I also know it is important for other reasons as well, not just dollars and cents. It is important because it is how, historically, in this country, we passed on our values from one generation to the next. Working side by side with moms and dads and grandparents is the way we pass on character and values and integrity from one generation to the next. It is something that throughout the history of our country has been important across our Nation when every place was a rural part of our Nation.

To most young people growing up on that family farm, jobs are routine, it is a part of their lives. These Department of Labor regulations are going to intrude significantly in that ability. According to the American Farm Bureau Federation, about 98 percent of our country's 2 million farms are family owned. By working alongside those parents and grandparents, important skills and values are learned. The problem we face now is that agriculture is a way of life and the Department of Labor wants to change that.

Until recently, farms jointly owned and operated by multiple family members had discretion over the responsibilities they gave their children on the farm. But this new rule would do away with that freedom. The Department of Labor is proposing to tell farmers and ranchers: We know what is best for your children and what they should and should not be doing.

The Department of Labor is also trying to do away with successful farm safety and training certification programs. In our part of the country and around the Nation, 4-H and FFA county extension offices are very important. They play a critical role in training and certifying young people to safely carry on farm activities. That happens today. But the Department has ignored research that shows such programs improve safety habits of young

people and instead criticizes these training programs for being too locally driven and lacking Federal direction.

One would assume, before making such a drastic change to farm labor rules, the Department would identify reliable evidence and data that show the need for changes, but it is quite the opposite. In fact, the Department of Labor admits it lacks data to justify many of its suggested changes. Furthermore, according to the National Farm Medicine Center, youth-related injuries from farm accidents have declined by nearly 60 percent from 1998 to 2009.

If you ask any farmer or rancher about the importance of safety, they would tell you safety is at the top of their list. It is their children. It is their neighbor's children. They care greatly. But they would also tell you it is critical for the rural way of life to be able to train and encourage the next generation to safely and successfully begin careers in agriculture. If today's young people are not given the chance to learn at a young age what it takes to operate a farm, we put at risk the future of agriculture in our Nation.

If these changes go into effect, not only will the shrinking rural workforce be further reduced and our Nation's youth be deprived of valuable career training opportunities but, most important, a way of life begins to disappear. Our country cannot afford to lose the next generation of farmers and ranchers.

I shared my concerns with the Secretary of Labor several weeks ago, in which we asked for a delay, a longer comment period. The comment period was running through fall harvest across most of the country. The Department of Labor granted a 30-day extension, but that expired December 1, about 2 weeks ago. Parents and communities should be allowed to look after the best interests of their families and citizens. Now that comment period has run. I hope the Department of Labor will take into account the serious concerns by farmers and ranchers, their families, and agribusiness across the country. But just a delay and longer comment period is insufficient. In fact, I am circulating a letter among my colleagues in the Senate that I am asking them to sign, requesting the Department of Labor not proceed to implement these rules. I ask my colleagues to take a look at that letter and please join me.

Local experts should be the ones conducting safety training programs to educate our Nation's young people. The future of agriculture depends on stopping this vast overreach of Executive authority, protecting individual rights.

We know rural America's values are not always the values held in Washington, DC. In the weeks ahead, I will continue to work with my colleagues to make certain this destructive rule does not move forward so we can protect and preserve our values for the next generation of American farmers

and ranchers, values our country so desperately needs.

TRIBUTE TO AARON POPELKA

Mr. MORAN. One of the beneficiaries of growing up on a family farm in Kansas is somebody I would also like to mention briefly this morning. As Members of Congress, we surround ourselves with bright minds and fellow natives of our home States. I have had the privilege of working alongside a young man, Aaron Popelka, as a member of my staff for 6 years. In those years, Aaron has proven himself to be a thoughtful voice in a chaotic Capitol Hill culture. With a bright policy mind, Aaron has advised me on agriculture and energy and trade policy while also serving as my chief council.

A native of Munden, KS, Aaron brought with him a commonsense approach to the way he conducted his duties on behalf of our State. Aaron will continue his duties on behalf of Kansans but in a different fashion. Aaron has accepted a position back home in Kansas and will leave my staff at end of the year. The lure of returning home to Kansas is powerful. Over the years, I have lost valued members of my staff, much like the rest of you. However, I appreciate the fact that while their departure from Washington DC is not pleasing to me, more often than not they return home to Kansas and the result is a benefit to our home State.

I am thankful for having had Aaron as a member of my staff. I am thankful for the faithful service he has provided to my fellow citizens in our home State. But I am most thankful for his friendship and I look forward to our paths crossing again back home.

Aaron, best of luck to you and God bless you and your family.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COATS. Mr. 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.

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes as in morning business.

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

HINDERING JOB CREATION

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, the holiday season is coming upon us, a period of celebration and joy. But as we prepare to spend time with our friends and our families in the coming weeks, it is important to remember during this holiday season there are many families out there across this country who are hurting.

As I visit with Hoosiers, I hear concern in the voices of parents trying to