

friends want to bring about—after fighting to make sure millionaires and billionaires are not asked to pay more in taxes—is to slash unemployment insurance in a very significant way.

Now, there is another issue dealing with employment above and beyond unemployment insurance; that is, that the House Republican bill, the ideas that they are bringing into the conference, would freeze Federal employee pay through 2015, and over a period of years reduce the civilian workforce by 10 percent, cutting some 200,000 decent-paying jobs.

Now, let's be clear. For Federal employees there has already been a pay freeze for the last 2 years. Those are the nurses in our Veterans' Administration hospitals. Those are people who are making \$30,000, \$40,000 a year. There is now a proposal to once again extend the freeze to them.

This is a real cut in real wages because inflation is going up for our Federal employees. But what concerns me equally is not only the impact this freeze would have on Federal employees, it sends a signal to every employer in America who says: Well, yes, I know you guys have not gotten a wage increase in a number of years. I know that I have asked you to pay more for health insurance. Yes, we have cut back on your pensions. But guess what. In Washington, the Congress says they are going to once again, for the third year, freeze Federal pay. In fact, they are going to ask Federal employees to pay more, too, for their pensions, which means a cut for many Federal employees. Well, if the Federal Government can do it, it says to private employers all over America so can they.

One of the points President Obama has been making and why he last fought for a middle-class tax cut is that he wants to put more money into the hands of working families. I understand that. I agree with that concept. But what is the sense of providing tax breaks for the middle class on one hand—a concept which I support—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for 2 additional minutes.

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

Mr. SANDERS. What is the sense on one hand in saying, we need to put money in the hands of the middle class through a tax cut, and, on the other hand, send a green light to employers all over this country who will now look at the Federal Government and then say to their employees: Hey, the Federal Government has frozen wages for a third year, cut back on pension programs, and we are going to do that as well.

Lastly, but not least, for whatever reason, my Republican colleagues in the House have put into this mix of a payroll tax holiday a demand that the Keystone XL tar sands project be completed; that the President be forced, as

I understand it, to make a decision on this within the next several months.

The reality is that among many other factors, the inspector general of the State Department is currently investigating whether the State Department acted inappropriately in appointing a particular company to do the environmental study which, amazingly enough, given the fact that I think they had a conflict of interest, ended up in a very positive light.

So the inspector general is now looking at a conflict of interest issue in terms of the environmental study which will take a bit of time. Furthermore, I think many of us understand that at a time when greenhouse gas emissions are rising rapidly in this country and all over the world, at a time when virtually the entire scientific community tells us that global warming is an enormously significant problem for the future of our planet, at a time when we are seeing increased floods and droughts and extreme weather disturbances, anyone who has studied the issue understands that in terms of global warming, the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline is a very dangerous project.

Producing energy-intensive tar sands oil emits 82 percent more carbon pollution and contributes more to global warming than conventional oil, according to the EPA.

With that, let me conclude but just suggest that I think we need to be discussing publicly some of the issues that we may be voting on in a very short period of time.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

FEDERAL DEFICIT

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, we will be voting, I understand, on three pieces of legislation from the House. One is a massive omnibus bill that would include 9 of the 13 appropriations bills that should be brought up individually and voted on individually, with amendments on each one. They have all been cobbled together now at the end of the year in one giant omnibus bill, with only a few hours for us to review their contents.

In addition, there will be a vote to offset certain emergency expenditures—in other words, pay for these new expenditures with savings elsewhere in the government rather than borrow the money for it—add to our debt for it. A third vote will be, in effect, to fund and appropriate the money that would be so offset or spend it by borrowing it if it is not offset.

I would just share with my colleagues one particular thing. The Presiding Officer, Senator WHITEHOUSE, is on the Budget Committee, and our staff has looked at these budget numbers. I would just advise my colleagues—I believe they should vote to offset the additional expenditure. This is the reason: The Budget Control Act

enacted this summer was part of an effort where Republicans said: We will raise the debt limit, but we want you to cut spending. We need to cut back on spending because we have had a series of deficits the likes of which the Nation has never seen before. We have to do better. We need to reduce spending.

Our Democratic colleagues resisted. So when it was finally done, it was a \$900 billion-plus reduction in spending, which was to occur over 10 years. Plus, the committee of 12 was supposed to find \$1.2 trillion more if they could. If they could not, there would be an automatic cut of that. So it would be about a \$2.1 trillion savings over 10 years.

Experts have told us we need at least \$4 trillion in savings over 10 years, not \$2 trillion. But it was a step in the right direction, and that was the best that could be done under the circumstances. So the bill was passed. What I want to say is that under that legislation, it was discovered that this year—the current fiscal year, that began October 1—we were going to spend \$1.43 trillion instead of the \$1.5 trillion we spent last year. So there was a lot of heartburn and complaining. We are only cutting \$7 billion out of the discretionary portion of our budget, not Social Security and Medicare, but other programs that are going up every year: food stamps, college loans, Pell grants.

So we were going to cut at least the discretionary accounts by \$7 billion, from \$1.50 trillion to 1.43 billion. But I have to say, we are not going to achieve that. Just as has so often been the case, we promise reductions in spending but do not get there. You would think that we could find \$7 billion. You would think that is not too much to ask this government, that has been increasing spending at a substantial rate, to reduce spending a little bit.

In fact, in the first 2 years of President Obama's administration, non-defense discretionary spending went up 24 percent, a dramatic increase. So to reduce spending and try to get this huge deficit under control is not too much to ask, in my opinion. Indeed, we are borrowing 40 percent of every dollar we spend. This year we will spend about \$3.6 trillion and take in about \$2.2 trillion or \$2.3 trillion. That is just not any way to do business.

This will be the third straight year that has happened. So we were looking for some improvement. I would just say to my colleagues, this is one little offset, \$8 billion in additional spending, and it will determine whether we have any reduction in spending or whether, in fact, contrary to our promises this summer, we will spend more this year than last year.

These are the numbers as we have calculated them from the Budget Committee staff. The regular appropriations would be this year \$1.43 trillion, but they have added to it disaster and other spending of \$11 billion, which

would mean we would be spending \$1.54 trillion, more than the \$1.50 trillion we spent last year. We would be spending more, not less.

The House has sent over a bill that would offset \$9 billion of that, which would bring the total spending this year to \$1.45 trillion. That would reduce our spending this year by \$5 billion, not as much as we promised in the Budget Act but at least a modest reduction.

It is a very important vote. It is a symbolic vote. It says: Are we honest with the American people when we go before them with a bill that says we are going to spend less than we spent last year, even if it was a small amount? We cannot even achieve that.

Perhaps that is why people are unhappy with us. We have been promising them that we would do something about the debt situation in this country. But we have not done much. As a matter of fact, we have done almost nothing.

So I would just urge my colleagues to think about that as they cast their votes on this portion of the House legislation, which has not been discussed much among our colleagues, and not particularly well-understood. But I do think it is important. I think it is an important, symbolic vote.

Are we willing to do that? It would amount to about a 1.86-percent, less than 2 percent across-the-board rescission to offset spending on the other spending items, exempting defense and some other items. Defense, of course, has taken dramatic cuts already. They are working on very dramatic cuts, and as a result of the failure of the committee of 12, they will take a huge cut.

The Defense Department has taken, on a percentage basis and a real dollar basis, far more in reductions than any other department. Of course this is not for war spending. War is in a separate overseas contingency account. This is the base defense budget that is taking the cuts. I wanted to share that with my colleagues.

I also appreciated Senator HOEVEN's presentation on the Keystone Pipeline. And I truly believe, and agree with my friend from Vermont, that unemployment is a tremendous problem for us.

What I don't agree with is that it can be fixed by borrowing and spending and taxing. That is what we have seen lately. I suggest that one way to deal with unemployment is to not spend any government money, get the government bureaucrats busy, examine this pipeline. We have pipelines crossing all over this country. If we bring those under control, approve this pipeline, it will add 20,000 real jobs and 100,000 indirect jobs and make this country more safe and secure from foreign energy exploitation.

I yield the floor.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for as long as I may consume.

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

The Senator from Arizona is recognized.

OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I rise to discuss the Omnibus appropriations conference report that I guess will be before this body at the pleasure of the members of the Appropriations Committee.

I call my colleagues' attention to the size of this bill. There are 13 agencies of government, all appropriations bills, and none of this, because of the pressing issues of the calendar, will be open to any amendments—no amendments regarding all these functions of government and a cost of, in this particular bill, it is \$915 billion. These are 9 appropriations bills of the 12. This contains \$915 billion that we will probably be considering, and because of the fact that we all have to get out of town—and I am one of those—we will vote sometime tomorrow, and we will be able to tell our constituents we have completed our task for the year, at least as far as funding the government to continue—as we seem to threaten to do every year, although I am not sure people are as frightened as they used to be.

This bill before me is 1,221 pages long and contains funding for nine of the annual appropriations bills, for a grand total of \$915 billion. If you add the three appropriations bills already enacted, we are going to spend \$1.043 trillion. That is a fantastic improvement because last year it was \$1.1 trillion. So I am glad our constituents, whom we promised, when some of us, such as myself, ran in 2010 for reelection, that we would get this \$15 trillion debt under control—and we go back to Washington and eliminate the reckless and out-of-control spending, I am sure they will be pleased to know that instead of \$1.1 trillion, we are now down to \$1.043 trillion—a reduction of approximately 5 percent. We can get a better deal than that at the Macy's Christmas sale. Of course, not to forget the earmarks—here it is.

I am confident no average Member of the Senate—what I mean by that is not a member of the Appropriations Committee has had a chance to peruse this hernia-inducing piece of legislation. If it sounds like I am a little cynical and a little angry, it is because I am, and the American people are cynical and angry.

There are 535 Members of Congress. All of us are sent by our constituents to represent them. But I think the American people and our constituents should know this is a report on a bill that is signed by 37 Members of the House and 17 Members of the Senate. There are 535 Members, and these are the ones who put this together. It is full of hundreds of earmarks, pork, unnecessary spending, and projects in the defense portion of the bill, which I will be talking a fair amount about, which

are neither requested nor needed by the men and women serving in the military. It is full of things I will talk about later on, such as artifact museums for Guam, medical research—this is in the Defense appropriations bill and has nothing to do with defense.

Then we begin to wonder why the American people have such a low opinion of our performance in our Nation's Capital. I saw a poll that says it is as low as 9 percent. Hopefully, that is not representative—maybe it is a 10-, 11-, 12-percent approval rating. We were debating a bill last year that had \$1.1 trillion and contained 6,488 earmarks that totaled \$8.3 billion. Now we have a bill that is \$915 billion, and this year we have no traditional earmarks, but there is \$3.5 billion in unauthorized spending in the Department of Defense portion of the bill alone—the Defense appropriations part of it is \$3.5 billion, on which there has never been a hearing, and it has never been considered by the Armed Services Committee. If it was, it was rejected. So we have \$3.5 billion just in the defense part of the bill. Nobody wanted it or asked for it, neither the military, nor the services, nor was there a hearing. They added \$3.5 billion in the Department of Defense alone.

I think the men and women in the military deserve better than some of these earmarks that I will talk about. Here we are, we are going to rush and beat the clock, and we haven't even moved to this piece of legislation yet. In case some of our constituents don't know, a call will be made to everybody saying please agree to a few hours' time agreement so we can vote tomorrow and we can all go home, and we will. There will not be a single amendment debated and voted on, on this bill on this floor. I would like to say we didn't see it coming, but the fact is we did see it coming.

In keeping with the regular order and legislating requirements of the Senate, the Armed Services Committee—of which I have been a proud member for many years—scheduled and conducted more than 70 hearings, vetted the President's budget request, and reported a bill out. Seven months later, we moved to the floor of the Senate and we did authorize funding and hundreds of millions of dollars and the appropriators decided they knew better. We have a fundamental problem in the Senate, and we are unable to engage in the process of authorizing prior to the regular appropriations. What is the outcome? A handful of people—all good, honest, decent people, I am sure—and unelected staff disburse hundreds of billions of dollars, often in a manner that directly contradicts the will of the authorizers—those who are entrusted in their Committee assignments to authorize what is necessary to defend this Nation.

So here we are at the eleventh hour ramming through a measure so we can get out of town for the holidays. I will talk about some of the provisions,