

health care, we have got to cut back on Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and every other program a middle class and a working class, hurting desperately in the midst of this recession, depend upon.

In my view, this is an ideology which is grotesquely immoral and it is also bad economic policy. It has failed time after time, most recently during the Bush administration when, during his 8 years in office, we lost 500,000 private sector jobs, the worst job performance record in modern American history. It is an ideology which, in poll after poll, has been rejected by the American people.

For example, a few days ago a Washington Post poll came out, and 72 percent of the American people—and this is similar to every other poll I have seen—said that if we are going to be effective in dealing with deficit reduction, the most preferred way is to ask those people making more than \$250,000 a year to pay more in taxes—72 percent of the American people.

The Republicans, on the other hand, have fought time and time again to say that the wealthy and the largest corporations, some of which make billions in profit, pay nothing in taxes. They are not to be asked for 1 cent of sacrifice in deficit reduction; just working families, just children, just the elderly, just the sick.

It seems to me in this very late date of this debate we face four options, none of which is particularly good.

The first option is what some of the rightwing extremists have wanted all along: Let us default. It is not a problem. So what if millions of Social Security recipients don't get their check. So what if veterans don't get the check they were promised. So what, if sick people who were dependent upon Medicare and Medicaid cannot get the medical help they need? No problem, let's default. Clearly, most of us understand that scenario would be a disaster for this country, for our economy, and, in fact, for the entire global economy.

The second option we are looking at is a bill that was passed Friday in the Republican House, the so-called Boehner bill. This bill would require massive cuts right now to a wide variety of programs and, most importantly, it would bring this congressional circus back into action immediately because within 6 months we would have to go over this debate once again. That is an absurd proposal. And included in that proposal, because they want huge amounts of cuts 6 months from now, no question, massive cuts to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid—that is what the Boehner proposal is about.

The third option is the Reid bill. This bill, while by no means as destructive as the Boehner bill, is also bad news for working families. Because of the Republican commitment to the wealthiest people in this country and the largest corporations, it also would make heavy cuts on working families and not one penny of revenue coming from the rich and large corporations.

Let me discuss the one remaining option that seems to me to make at least some sense. It is not a great option but the best available. That has already been spoken about by my good friend TOM HARKIN. It seems to me that the least onerous option available to us today is for the President of the United States to exercise his authority under the 14th amendment to the Constitution to pay the debts incurred by the United States. The Constitution is very clear in saying that the debts of the United States "shall not be questioned."

The President swears an oath to protect and defend the Constitution, and many constitutional scholars believe the 14th amendment gives the President the authority and responsibility to pay our debts regardless of the dysfunctionality of the U.S. Congress. I think that is just what he should do if he is left with no other way to protect the full faith and credit of the United States.

I believe former President Bill Clinton is absolutely right in saying that if he were still in the White House, that is what he would do. Clinton said, and I agree with him:

I think the Constitution is clear and I think this idea that the Congress gets to vote twice on whether to pay for expenditures it has appropriated is crazy.

Let me be clear about what exactly this means and why it is so important that the President use this amendment now, at this particular moment in history. Let's remember that the debt ceiling was raised 18 times under Ronald Reagan and 7 times under George W. Bush, when the national debt increased by some \$5 trillion. If we concede to the rightwing Republicans and if we make all of these cuts right now because they refuse to raise the debt ceiling, this sets a horrendous precedent for the future of congressional action. What this would mean is that no matter what legislation and appropriations were passed by the future Congress, the new Congress could simply say: We refuse to pay those bills. This would cause massive uncertainty in the financial market, drive interest rates up, and cloud the entire legislative process of the U.S. Congress. That is wrong and must not happen.

I understand there are those who disagree with this option, and I respect that. But I think we have an obligation to our senior citizens and our veterans to say: Yes, you are going to get the Social Security checks and the other benefits you have been promised. We have an obligation to our children and to the sick that, yes, you are going to get the Medicare and Medicaid benefits you have been promised. Incredibly, we have an obligation to the men and women in our Armed Forces who are putting their lives on the line. We have an obligation to them to make sure they get paid.

If Republican recalcitrance prevents us from reaching an agreement, then the President of the United States

must do what is best for our people and for the future of this country. He must use his constitutional authority under the 14th amendment to pay our debts.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MICKULSKI). The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, how much time do I have under the order?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 13½ minutes remaining on the Democratic side.

#### NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to consideration of S. Res. 246, which was submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 246) recognizing and commending the 2011 National Veterans Wheelchair Games, to be held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, August 1 through August 6, 2011.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I rise today in favor of this resolution to recognize the importance of the National Veterans Wheelchair games which will be held in Pittsburgh, PA, starting August 1. This resolution recognizes the great contributions that this event makes towards improving the lives of disabled veterans and commends the organizers of this event.

I am proud to welcome veterans from across the country to Pittsburgh, PA, this year as they participate in the 31st annual National Veterans Wheelchair Games. The games offer veterans with disabilities an opportunity to foster improved health through competition. Veterans can participate in 17 different events which include swimming, rugby, bowling, soccer and track and field events. These games have allowed for veterans, including those who have served in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom a chance to meet with other wheelchair athletes and to continue to use their athletic skills in competition.

Participants come from almost every State in the United States, from Puerto Rico and from the United Kingdom. They range from world class athletes to first time competitors. A quarter of the athletes will be participating for the first time.

As a Senator representing the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, home to over 1 million veterans, the care and treatment of veterans is one of my highest priorities. I firmly believe that this country must be grateful for the safe homecoming of every single man and woman who has served in harm's way. Our joy at their return must be reflected in our commitment to helping all those who have served, especially those who are coping with devastating physical injuries and illnesses.

During my time in the U.S. Senate, I have sponsored and supported legislation to help our Nation's veterans. I strongly believe that treatment and rehabilitation of our Nation's veterans should be among our highest priorities. These games offer our Nation's veterans an opportunity to overcome adversity and work towards rehabilitation. As such the games deserve our support and attention.

It is with great pride that I offer this resolution to recognize the contribution that this event makes towards improving the lives of disabled veterans and commend the organizers and volunteers of this event. I thank Senator TOOMEY for joining me in sponsoring this and I urge all of my colleagues to join me in support of this resolution.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I further ask that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and that any statements be printed in the RECORD.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 246) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

#### S. RES. 246

Whereas the National Veterans Wheelchair Games are a multi-event sports and rehabilitation program for veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, amputations, or neurological problems;

Whereas the National Veterans Wheelchair Games is the largest annual wheelchair sporting event in the world, attracting roughly 600 athletes annually;

Whereas in 2011, the National Veterans Wheelchair Games will be held August 1 through August 6, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania;

Whereas competitive events at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games include table tennis, archery, swimming, quad rugby, weightlifting, air guns, nine-ball, basketball, softball, bowling, handcycling, power soccer, trapshooting, Super "6" slalom, a motorized wheelchair rally, and track and field events;

Whereas the National Veterans Wheelchair Games provide veterans with disabilities the opportunity to enhance their quality of life and promote better health through sports competition; and

Whereas past National Veterans Wheelchair Games have produced national and world-class champions and given newly disabled veterans, including veterans who have served in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, a chance to participate in events with other wheelchair athletes and to continue to use their athletic skills in competition: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes the significant contribution that the National Veterans Wheelchair Games make to the lives of disabled veterans who have selflessly served the United States; and

(2) commends the organizers and volunteers of and the participants in the 2011 National Veterans Wheelchair Games for their efforts in service of the United States.

#### ESTABLISHING THE COMMISSION ON FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT PROCESSING DELAYS—Continued

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I want to say that I listened very carefully to the remarks of the senior Senator from Maryland about where we find ourselves. I want to associate myself with her remarks on what a dire situation we are in at this moment. We really stand tonight on the edge of an economic calamity. Why is that? America is at the brink of being unable to pay our bills, bills we already voted to pay way in the past. When you raise the debt ceiling, it is not about future spending, it is about meeting your obligations.

How did we get to this debt? How did we get to this debt? For many years, we ran deficits, and they added up.

But I remember that when Bill Clinton was President—Madam President, I know you remember this—we balanced the budget. We didn't have a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution; we balanced the budget by sitting down and figuring out what was wasteful spending, what were important investments. We had economic growth, 23 million new jobs, and all the revenues that came with them. We had surpluses.

When George W. Bush became President, he said about this surplus: I have to give this back to the people. And he gave it back to the millionaires and the billionaires. He put two wars on the credit card. Poof—there went the surplus. Then he had a prescription drug benefit, but he didn't pay for it, and there went the surplus. Two wars on the credit card, prescription drug benefit on the credit card, and tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires on the credit card, and all of a sudden, we started to see the debt rise.

My Republican friends who have suddenly discovered this debt never said a word when George Bush was President and we raised the debt ceiling nine times. Did you see the Democrats out here on the floor threatening to hold up the whole country? Did you see the Democrats saying: We won't give George Bush an increase in the debt ceiling unless he does whatever we want. We didn't do that. We should not ever do that. That is what is going on here. Republicans, led by the far extreme of their party, are holding this country hostage, and they are saying that unless they get their way, they will not relent.

I pray and I hope—and I am talking to my Republican friends in these hours—we will be able to come to some agreement. But I will say this: We are now facing a filibuster by my Republican friends. They will not allow us to vote on the Reid amendment with just a majority vote. They are demanding a supermajority. What I find interesting is they did not demand a supermajority vote over in the House on the Boehner proposal. That was done by a simple majority. Now they say we need a

supermajority to vote on the Reid proposal.

HARRY REID has his door wide open; you know that as well as I. He has invited MITCH MCCONNELL—all the Republicans: Come on in. I am here. I am ready to negotiate. What is it that you need?

So far, we know there are conversations going on among Members. We do not see that leadership coming from Leader MCCONNELL. I hope he is rethinking this because the whole world is watching. They see a filibuster tonight. They understand which side is trying to resolve it.

How did we really get here? I explained how we got to the debt. How did we get to this moment? The debt ceiling needed to be raised, and our Republican friends said to our President: We are not going to give you a clean debt ceiling increase. We want to sit down and work on some cuts to the budget.

Guess what. The President said: I don't know, but we will do it. Come on in, we will do it.

Then the President said: You know what. Let's get a really big deal. Let's get a \$4 trillion deal. Let's get out of this budgetary crisis.

The President gave and gave, and what was the reward? First ERIC CANTOR stalked out of the talks. He stalked out. "I don't want to be part of this." He took his little blanky and went home.

Then JOHN BOEHNER—he is in the talks, and he walks out of the talks not once but twice. He said: Well, I am done with this. I am going to work with the people on Capitol Hill. I am going to go talk to the bipartisan leadership here.

We said: Fine. We will try to work with you.

But they want everything their way: My way or the highway. If you ever looked up what "compromise" means, it means everybody gives a little.

We didn't want to attach this to the debt ceiling increase, but we said: OK, we will do it. You feel strongly about it. We will do it.

They said: OK. We don't want any new revenues.

They don't want to touch millionaires and billionaires. God forbid they should pay \$5 more a year to help us.

We said: You know what, we think it is wrong, but if that is what you are saying, we will just do cuts.

That was not happy. HARRY REID did more cuts than the Republicans—twice as many. That still was not good enough for them. It is always more of what they want.

I raised a family, and I know sometimes it is tough. This is the American family. If you have an argument between two kids in your family—I had two children. Now I have four grandchildren. They argue, and you have to say: Let's listen to each other first. I will give up something, and you give up something. Let's meet in the middle.

Oh, no. Then you think: Wait a minute, why do they think they deserve every single thing they want?