

our proposal to bring a measure of fairness to America's tax system, but far from it. One Member of the Senate leadership equated this measure to shooting ourselves in the head. The Paying a Fair Share Act—the Buffett rule—would have ensured that millionaires and billionaires paid at least as much as their secretaries, assistants, and even their nannies. Yet Republicans think asking those lucky millionaires and billionaires to contribute their fair share is just like shooting the country in the head. That is what they said.

Our legislation would have protected 99 percent of small business owners and maintained deductions for charitable giving, and it would have been a small but meaningful step to reduce our deficit at a time when every penny—in this case, every billion—counts.

It does not seem radical to me to ask Warren Buffett, who made almost \$63 million in 2010, to pay a higher tax rate than his secretary. The Presiding Office can remember when he came and spoke to a group of assembled Democrats. He carried around with him his tax returns for the last several years. He is the one who told us how much he made in 2010, and he lamented the fact that he was paying the tax rate that he was.

Well, it does not seem radical to me, it did not seem radical to Ronald Reagan, and it does not seem radical to three-quarters of the American people who support our legislation. The wealthiest Americans take home a greater percentage of our Nation's income than anytime in nearly a century. Yet they enjoy the lowest tax rate in more than five decades—the lowest tax rate. So it is no surprise that Americans believe millionaires should shoulder their fair share. Even two-thirds of millionaires and a majority of Republicans around the country agree it is time to fix a system rigged to favor the richest of the rich. Republicans in Congress are the only ones not on board on this issue.

If you need evidence that millionaires and billionaires can afford to contribute a little more, consider this one simple fact: Last year there were 7,000 people who made more than \$1 million who did not pay a single penny of Federal income tax—not a penny. Thanks to Republicans, these lucky millionaires and billionaires can keep gaming the system while middle-class workers keep picking up the tab.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

A NEED FOR SOLUTIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday I highlighted some of the tremendous challenges we face in our country and this President's refusal to

face them with the seriousness they demand.

At a moment when the Federal debt makes us look a lot like Greece, President Obama spends his time running around stumping for a tax hike that he knows will not help and that he knows will not pass. On gas prices, the President's response has been to call for a tax hike on energy manufactures, which, if anything, will drive the price of gas even higher and which he knows will not pass.

Now we hear that the President is announcing some kind of task force on oil speculation today—in other words, the same thing Washington Democrats always call for when gas prices go up. If I were to guess, I would say today's proposal by the President probably polls pretty well, but I guarantee you it will not do a thing to lower the price of gas at the pump. It never has in the past. White House officials admit as much. So why would it now?

The Democrats' favorite policy adviser, Warren Buffett, weighed in on the issue a few years ago. Here is what Warren Buffett had to say about it. Asked about the role speculation in the oil markets plays in determining price, he said, "It's not speculation, it's supply and demand." That is Warren Buffett on speculation relating to the oil markets. "It's not speculation," Warren Buffett said, "it's supply and demand." But, of course, that is not the point for this White House. President Obama only seems to care about Warren Buffett's opinion if it polls well.

The President's goal here is not to do something about the problem, it is to make people think he is doing something about the problem until the next crisis comes along. And that is the larger problem, that we have a President who is more concerned with looking as if he is doing something than in actually doing what is needed to tackle the challenges we face. We have a President who told us that he was a different kind of politician doing the same old things and using the same old talking points politicians in Washington have been peddling for literally years—for years. I mean, weren't these kinds of gimmicks and stale talking points precisely what President Obama campaigned against 4 years ago? I thought he was offering something new, something different.

I think the Associated Press summed up the President's latest proposal pretty well this morning. The White House plan, which Obama was to unveil Tuesday, the AP said, is more likely to draw sharp election-year distinctions with Republicans than to have an immediate effect on prices at the pump. Well, AP pretty well summed it up. They said it is more about drawing a distinction. Look, we do not need new distinctions, we need solutions. Americans need lawmakers who are more concerned with facing up to the problems we face than getting reelected. They need a President who thinks

about solving a problem, a President who thinks solving a problem involves more than giving a speech about it and pointing the finger at whatever does not poll well that particular day.

As I said yesterday, the President seems to have forgotten why he was elected in the first place. He seems to have forgotten his own campaign rhetoric: that he was going to be different, that he would bridge differences, that he would bring people together. The reality could not be more different or more disappointing. The sad truth is that it is all politics, all the time in this White House. They are out of ideas. They have nothing new to offer. Today's announcement is all the proof you need of that.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 11 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Kansas.

IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, over the weekend the United States, Britain, France, China, Russia, and Germany returned to the negotiating table with Iran for the first time since January 2011. Reports indicate modest progress was made, and a second round of talks has now been scheduled for May.

While these negotiations represent an opportunity to achieve a peaceful outcome regarding Iran's nuclear program, the United States and our allies must guard against Iranian delays. Iran has a history of using negotiations as a stalling tactic. While our negotiators talk, the centrifuges keep spinning. That is the crux of the problem—Iran's nuclear program continues.

According to the most recent report in February from the International Atomic Energy Agency, Iran has produced more than 5,400 kilograms of low-enriched uranium and more than 100 kilograms of uranium enriched to a level of 20 percent. Enriching uranium to a level of 20 percent represents 85 to 90 percent of the work needed to reach weapons-grade fuel. Iran is also preparing additional cascades used to produce enriched uranium, which will accelerate the speed at which it can stockpile nuclear material. In total, Iran has enriched enough uranium

that, upon further processing, could build three to four nuclear weapons.

In response to Iran's continued nuclear program and its defiance of United Nations' Security Council resolutions, the United States and many of our allies have adopted sanctions on Iran. Sanctions are having a significant impact on the Iranian economy. In March, Iran's oil exports fell nearly 300,000 barrels per day or 12 percent, according to foreign reports. Iran's currency has lost roughly half its value in the past year, and inflation is more than 20 percent. The new European Union sanctions are scheduled to take effect this summer. These would make it even more difficult for Iran to ship oil globally.

Once the EU sanctions go into effect in July, the Congressional Research Service estimates that oil sales could fall by up to 40 percent.

In addition, a major Chinese insurance provider has announced it will no longer insure ships carrying Iranian oil. These are important developments that will increase economic pressure on the Iranian regime. Yet neither sanctions nor past negotiations have stopped Iran's nuclear program and its quest for a nuclear weapon.

Iran's nuclear program threatens American interests. First, Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons increases the risk of global nuclear proliferation, which would jeopardize the security of the United States. The last two nations to acquire nuclear weapons—Pakistan and North Korea—have presented numerous challenges to American security interests.

North Korea provoked international condemnation last week when it launched its rocket. In Pakistan, a December report in the Atlantic called into question the security of that country's nuclear arsenal, stating that Pakistan regularly transports nuclear weapons through city streets without much security.

If Iran obtains a nuclear weapon other nations in the Middle East may soon follow. Saudi Arabia has already said it will consider seeking nuclear capability if Iran's program is not stopped.

Second, a nuclear Iran could increase its support of terrorism. Iran is already one of the world's leading state sponsors of terrorism, funneling money and weapons and supporting training for terrorist groups, including Hezbollah and Hamas. With a nuclear weapon Iran and its terrorist allies may be emboldened to carry out even more attacks. Furthermore, what would prevent Iran from giving nuclear weapons to one of the terrorist groups it supports, sharing its capabilities with one of the terrorist groups?

Third, a nuclear Iran could exert more influence over world oil markets. A direct link exists between volatile oil prices and Iran's nuclear program. Prices have risen when tensions have increased, and when tensions recede prices typically decline. American con-

sumers and businesses are directly affected by these volatile prices that negatively impact our economic well-being.

Although Saudi Arabia has pledged to boost production to make up for the loss of Iranian oil on the market, this will reduce spare production capacity and leave our country and the global economy vulnerable to any reduction in supplies, whether from conflicts within oil-producing nations or from natural disaster.

Finally, a nuclear Iran would threaten the safety of American troops serving abroad in the Middle East. For years Iran has fought American presence in the Middle East and has supported terrorist groups who have targeted and killed American troops. American officials believe Iran supported the terrorists responsible for the 1996 attack on a U.S. military residence in Saudi Arabia that killed 19 of our servicemen.

Iran also has long-range missiles that could hit U.S. military bases in the region, including ones in Turkey, Afghanistan, Bahrain, and Kuwait. Iran's nuclear program also threatens the existence of our ally, Israel.

The President of Iran has called for Israel to be "wiped off the map." If Iran acquires a nuclear weapon, its leaders would have the capability to do the destructive things of which they speak. Understandably, Israel is worried. Israelis know all too well the price of war because they have witnessed war and destruction. They know what can happen when evil men gain the ability to carry out evil deeds.

While some would have us believe Iran is Israel's problem, we should not be fooled. Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons threatens all nations that care about global peace and stability. We cannot leave Israel to deal with this crisis alone. American leadership is needed now more than ever to stop Iran. We can begin by passing the Iran Sanctions Accountability and Human Rights Act. This legislation, which came through the Banking Committee, on which I serve, earlier this year strengthens and expands existing sanctions and for the first time makes it official U.S. policy to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. The administration and President Obama must also fully enforce U.S. law and penalize those who violate U.S. sanctions.

In addition, the U.S. should use current negotiations to bring about an end to Iran's nuclear program. As a party to the nonproliferation treaty, Iran must adhere to its obligations under that treaty and provide transparency to international inspectors.

The longer Iran's nuclear program continues, the greater the danger grows for the United States and all nations. Last month, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke in Washington. He is an incredible leader, and his speech to Congress last year was one of the best I have ever heard. While speaking in Washington last

month, he laid out very clearly why a nuclear Iran would be such a grave danger. He said for the last 15 years he has been warning the world about a nuclear Iran.

We must not be fooled by negotiations that only stall and continue to create the opportunity for greater disaster down the road. Prime Minister Netanyahu said no one would be happier than he if Iran gave up its nuclear quest. But there are many around the world who would be happy because we all know the world would be a far safer, more peaceful place without a nuclear Iran. While we all desire a peaceful resolution, negotiations must not be a stalling tactic or an excuse for inaction.

Thursday of this week is Holocaust Remembrance Day. As we pause to remember and reflect on this past tragedy, the United States must act to prevent a nuclear Iran and the real possibility of a future tragedy. The world cannot again look the other way.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PAUL. 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.

AID TO EGYPT

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I rise today to speak to an amendment that would end aid to Egypt until they end the prosecution of our U.S. citizens. I offered this amendment earlier this spring when Egypt was detaining our citizens—these prodemocracy workers—and was not letting them leave the country. Since then, they have let them leave the country but sort of in an insulting fashion in the sense they have let them leave when we paid, basically, ransom. We had to pay about \$5 million in ransom—\$300,000 per person—to let these people leave Egypt.

So they came home, but Egypt still could only get its aid if the administration certified they were pro democracy. Within days, Secretary Clinton did release the aid and said they were achieving their democratic goals. I wrote a letter to Secretary Clinton asking her not to do this because the prosecutions still go on. These American citizens who were allowed to leave the country had to pay \$300,000 in bail but they also had to sign a statement saying they were coming back for the trial.

Everybody said, well, I doubt they are ever going back to Egypt for these show trials. But it gets worse. It turns out in December of last year, President Obama signed an Executive order—this is Order No. 13524—that gives Interpol, the international police organization, immunity in our country. We also have an extradition treaty with Egypt,