

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Senate is now considering the motion to proceed to H.J. Res. 117, which is the continuing resolution, postcloture. The next 2 hours will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees with the Republicans controlling the first half and the Democrats the second half.

At 2 p.m., all postcloture time will be yielded back and there will be a roll-call vote on the motion to proceed to the continuing resolution.

I am hoping we can reach an agreement on our unfinished business and avoid a weekend session and a session in the early part of next week.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE
CALENDAR—S. 3576

Mr. REID. Mr. President, S. 3576 is at the desk and due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title for a second time.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3576) to provide limitations on United States assistance, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. I would object to any further proceedings with respect to this bill at this time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this month I join more than 52 million Latinos in Nevada and across the country to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month.

Each year Hispanic Heritage Month is an opportunity to honor the contributions of a population that is so important to our national identity—a community that has contributed to our country's progress for centuries.

We see those contributions in every facet of our society: on the battlefield and in the boardroom, in the courtroom and the classroom, at the art gallery and in the recording studio, and on the playing field. In Nevada Hispanic influence is evident in the name of our State—Nevada, snowcapped Las Vegas, and the meadows.

Today, more than one-quarter of Nevada's population is Hispanic. Nationwide, Latinos are expected to make up 60 percent of the population growth in the coming decades. To ensure our country thrives, we need to make sure its Hispanic population thrives as well.

That is why President Obama and Democrats in Congress have fought for the policies that are making the Hispanic community stronger and more prosperous. Despite opposition, we have made progress on economic and educational issues that are important to Latinos and to all Americans. The Recovery Act, which included tax cuts for working families and improvements

in unemployment insurance, kept more than 2 million Hispanics out of poverty.

Unlike Governor Romney, we know Americans who access the employment benefits they have earned while working are not "victims" who are unwilling to take "personal responsibility" for their lives. "Victims" is Mitt Romney's word; "personal responsibility" are his words.

Democrats secured tax credits for more than 8 million Hispanic children and their families. Mitt Romney, on the other hand, believes tax credits for working parents struggling to make ends meet are a hand out, not a hand up.

Democrats fought to give small business loans to almost 9,000 Hispanic-owned businesses. Under a Romney administration, loans for small businesses would be a thing of the past—one more remnant of the dependency culture he loathes.

Mitt Romney was caught on tape telling wealthy donors he would be winning this election if he was Latino. That is what he said. But we know Mitt Romney's problem isn't that he is not Hispanic; his problem is that he opposes the commonsense policies that are good for Hispanic families.

Republicans have been paying lip-service to concerned Hispanic families in the months leading up to election day. Democrats are helping Hispanic families tackle the challenges they face every day.

To us, Hispanic Heritage Month isn't just about recognizing the incredible contributions Hispanic Americans make to our Nation; it is also about building a brighter future for Hispanic Americans in our Nation.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY
LEADER

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

NEED FOR NEW LEADERSHIP

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, we all understand there is an election going on around here in a few months, but I would like to remind my colleagues on the other side that we also have a job to do right now. We have multiple crisis-level issues to deal with. Yet our Democratic friends don't seem to want to do a thing. Never before—never before—has a President and a Senate done so little to confront challenges so great.

We have a \$16 trillion debt. Democrats haven't bothered to pass a budget in 3 years. Every single American will get hit with a massive tax hike in just 3 months if we don't act to prevent it.

Democrats are saying we shouldn't do anything about it; just go off the cliff. Go off the cliff, and let's see what happens. The defense budget is about to suffer automatic cuts that the President's own Defense Secretary—the De-

fense Secretary in this administration—has described as devastating. But Democrats can't be bothered to figure out a way to avoid them.

The Middle East is in turmoil. We remain at war in Afghanistan and with al-Qaida, and Senate Democrats have not even bothered to pass the Defense authorization bill.

Gas prices have more than doubled over the past 4 years—doubled in just 4 years. Democrats responded by conspiring with the President to make sure a domestic pipeline didn't get built. They just let the debt grow, let taxes go up, let the defense cuts stand, and let gas prices get higher and higher. They don't pass a budget, don't pass any spending bills, don't do anything that involves making tough choices; just sit around and kill time in the hopes that the voters will focus on the other guys instead.

Look, our constituents didn't send us here to watch the clock or to offer running commentary on the Senate floor. They sent us here to make a difference. We have jobs to do. It is about time we did them. In these very challenging times, Americans deserve leadership. Never before—never before—has a President and a Senate majority party done so little when our challenges were so great. There is no excuse for it.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the next 2 hours shall be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees with the Republicans controlling the first half of the time.

The minority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, we have a number of colleagues who will be speaking this morning during our 1-hour morning business time. Given the number of speakers, I ask the Chair to help remind colleagues when they have consumed roughly 1 minute, and I thank the Chair for doing so.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair will do so.

The Senator from Tennessee.

SENATE LEADERSHIP

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, some say the reason for a do-nothing Senate—or the cure for it—is that we need to change the rules. I say we need a change in behavior, and I wish to offer a single example.

We have a big spending and borrowing problem: 42 cents out of every dollar we are borrowing. We are headed off a fiscal cliff. The minority leader has described that.

The Australian Foreign Minister has said the United States of America is

one budget deal away from restoring its global preeminence, so one would think we would have a budget. Then one would think we would deal with the appropriations bills which are the basic work of the Senate.

I and others on both sides of the aisle came to the floor earlier this year to compliment the majority and minority leaders for their decision to bring all 12 appropriations bills to the floor. The committee did its work; 11 of the 12 have been reported to the floor. The House did its work; 11 of the 12 were reported to the floor, and 6 were passed. But the majority leader said we are not going to consider any appropriations bills—no appropriations bills.

Being elected to the Senate and not being allowed to vote on appropriations bills is like being invited to join the Grand Ole Opry and not being allowed to sing. We need a Republican majority. If we have one we can have a budget, and if we have one we will bring appropriations bills to the floor. We will debate them, we will amend them, we will vote on them, and we will do our jobs.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, there is no question that the premier issue for most Americans is jobs and the economy. It is the issue that is on the minds of all Americans. They are pocketbook issues that impact middle-class Americans all across the country.

For the past 3½ years, the President and the Democrats here in the Senate have failed to provide the leadership America needs to make a stronger middle class. Middle-class Americans continue to face a bleak economic picture on this President's watch. We have seen gas prices more than double—the highest level in September that we have ever seen for the month of September. Middle-class income is down by nearly \$4,000 since the President took office. Just last week, a Kaiser Family Foundation study came out indicating worker health insurance costs have increased by 29 percent since the President took office. The President promised to lower health care costs by \$2,500 per family. Instead, average family premiums have increased by over \$3,000 since he took office.

Republicans have solutions to grow the economy and to help the middle class, strengthen the middle class. We support commonsense solutions such as increasing domestic energy, reforming our Tax Code, and stopping the job-killing regulations that are killing our small businesses. We hope to have the opportunity to work on those solutions for America's future.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, the President, the administration, and the Senate majority have failed to govern during a crucial time for our Nation. There is a willingness to kick our problems down the road, with the hopes

that the next election will suddenly inspire action. Rome burned while Nero fiddled. We have had enough fiddling.

The President's answer to jobs and the economy was to have his failed budget. Three times it was voted on without a single vote in favor—not even a single Democrat in favor.

Over 23 million Americans are unemployed or underemployed. Government regulations and redtape stunt business growth. That is not leadership, that is being asleep at the wheel. Their answer to jobs is a bill with a good title and a poison pill that comes right to the floor, and it is set up so the poison pill cannot be amended out, and then they wonder why the bill does not pass. That is politics. That is not legislating.

What is their plan for America? We have yet to see one. The lack of a budget shows they do not have a plan, and inaction remains the status quo. Republicans are prepared to lead today and in the future.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, when I talk to employers in my State about what Washington could do to get people back to work, they inevitably point to the flood of excessive regulation as a major barrier. Many of us have offered proposals to reform the regulatory process. Even the President's own Jobs Council has put forth ideas such as strengthening cost-benefit analysis. This just makes common sense. But, regrettably, the Senate has failed to act. Meanwhile, the burden of Federal regulation grows ever larger. Right now, Federal agencies are at work on 2,700 new rules. These rules will go on top of a pile of regulations measuring millions of pages. If we want to put people back to work, we have to cut the redtape that is strangling our job creators.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, if you look at any objective measure, whether it is unemployment numbers, gas prices, middle-class income, college tuition, manufacturing production, home values, and the list goes on and on, we are clearly not headed in the right direction. So what is the cause of this? The primary cause is lack of leadership coming from the administration and from the leadership in the Senate. The administration's policies have led to the worst recovery since World War II.

Over 23 million people are unemployed or underemployed. One of the main reasons they cannot find work is the economic uncertainty Washington has created, stopping the hiring process. Our businesses are frozen. As a former small business owner, I understand firsthand how economic uncertainty hampers business growth. If you do not know what your taxes are going to be, if you do not know what your energy costs are going to be, if you do not know what your health costs are going

to be, the last thing in the world you are going to do is hire a bunch of people.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, the No. 1 job of this Congress domestically should have been more private sector jobs. The President's long-held view of redistribution as a goal for the government is not going to accomplish that. What is going to accomplish that is more opportunity, more independence, as my friend from Arkansas just said, more certainty, more American energy.

These problems are big, but they are not necessarily that complicated. We just have to have the willpower to deal with them. This Congress has not done that. This Senate, more importantly, has not done that. The House has passed bills. The House has passed a budget. The House has passed appropriations bills. The House has passed bills to get regulation under control. The Senate has not.

I hope when we get back here—we should stay and do those things, but when we get back, we need to be focused on the No. 1 job for the country today, which is more American jobs.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, President Obama, when you took office almost 4 years ago, you promised to create jobs and reduce our deficit. Yet 4 years later we have fewer Americans working than in the last 30 years and we have historic debt and deficits. Now you say raising taxes will solve our problems. But those who create jobs disagree.

Yesterday a businessman from South Carolina came to Washington to present a very simple proposition. He had built his business from his garage to 150 workers, putting every dime he could back into his business. His plan was to add 25 workers next year if we keep taxes the same but to do nothing if we follow your plan to raise taxes.

Mr. President, if you really want to create jobs, help our economy, and reduce our deficit, stop threatening to raise taxes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, we have just heard from a number of my colleagues about issues with our jobs and the economy. We have heard about the \$16 trillion deficit. Unemployment has been over 8 percent for over 43 months. These are unprecedented problems. We have again learned a lesson we have learned time and time again in America: You cannot tax and regulate your way to prosperity.

Republicans in the Senate have provided an alternative. As this chart shows, this is the Republican Senate jobs plan. All 47 Republican Senators have supported it. We have introduced legislation that incorporates these

ideas, and yet we have not gotten a hearing on the Senate floor.

It is pretty simple. We believe we ought to live within our means. Fiscal discipline is part of getting the economy back on track. Reforming the Tax Code to spur economic growth—we know we can create millions of new jobs in this country by getting the Tax Code straightened out. The economic situation will not be improved in this country until we deal with regulatory relief. My colleagues have talked about that. Our ideas include having a more competitive force, changing the worker retraining program in this country, improving education to have a competitive workforce, increasing exports to create more jobs but also to level the playing field, powering America's economy by using the energy in the ground in America, and, finally, commonsense approaches to health care to get the costs down. These are the solutions that Republicans have offered that have not gotten a fair hearing on this floor for us to begin to turn this economy around and get America back on track.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, today I join my colleagues in expressing my disappointment in President Obama, in his failure to provide real leadership when our Nation needed it the most. While his failures can be observed across the board, when it comes to taxes and the impending fiscal cliff, the President has put our entire economy in jeopardy in order to serve his own political interests.

At the end of this year, the bipartisan tax relief signed into law not only by President Bush but by President Obama as well is set to expire. Virtually every taxpayer in America will see their taxes go up if Congress and the President do not act to steer us away from this fiscal cliff. Objective analysts, including the CBO, have stated that if we were to let the tax relief expire under current economic conditions, it would likely lead to another recession. Yet, rather than working with the Republicans to extend the tax relief and to aid our recovery, the President has once again sought to divide the American people by using the top marginal tax rate as political football.

In 2010 the President acknowledged that raising taxes in the midst of a weak economic recovery was bad policy. That is why at that time he signed into law the full extension of the 2001 and 2003 tax relief. Aside from the fact that the economy is in worse shape now than it was then, the only thing that has changed between 2010 and 2012 is that the President is now facing the voters, and that means appealing to his base, which is committed to raising taxes. The President has put class warfare and his own political future ahead of the immediate and long-term interests of our economy. This is the high-water mark of failed leadership for this

administration. Our country is at a moment of deep economic uncertainty, and America's citizens and taxpayers deserve more than the President's decision to prioritize electoral politics over sound fiscal policy.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, as the Chairs of the debt commission—Simpson and Bowles—told the Budget Committee, this Nation has never faced a more predictable financial crisis. I would say this Nation has never faced a more difficult financial challenge. We have deep, systemic demographic problems. They need to be addressed. Yet today marks the 1,240th day since the Democratic leadership in the Senate adopted a budget. For 3 years, in a time of financial crisis, the Senate's Democratic majority has failed to comply with the U.S. Code that requires us to bring up a budget and bring it to the floor of the U.S. Senate.

Politico observed on May 15:

Democratic leaders have defiantly refused to lay out their own vision for how to deal with federal debt and spending.

I believe that is a colossal failure of leadership, a failure of fundamental responsibility, and puts them in a position, in my opinion, of being unable to ask to be returned to leadership in this Senate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as the distinguished ranking member of the Budget Committee pointed out, it has been more than 3 years since the democratically controlled Senate has passed a budget. That should be a national scandal. During the same time, we have considered the President's proposed budgets, which have been voted down unanimously—that is, Republicans and Democrats both realize that the President's proposed budgets are unserious attempts to solve some of our most serious challenges. The President could not get a single vote from his own political party for his own plan because it does not include serious efforts to preserve and protect Social Security and Medicare and put us on a sound fiscal path without job-killing tax increases.

When Republicans regain the majority in the Senate, we will pass a budget, we will reduce the deficit, we will tackle our long-term debt, and we will help grow the American economy by getting our boot off the neck of the small businesses and the job creators in our country.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, this year we will spend over \$3.5 trillion, 60 percent of which is taxpayer money, 40 percent is borrowed. Over the next 10 years we will spend \$45 trillion. We have not had a budget in this body for 1,240 days. Not only is this dysfunctional—and America looks at us as a dysfunctional body—it is an embarrassment. The fact is that we are one fiscal

reform package away from being able to focus on being a great nation again. Yet many around the world look at us as a nation in decline, which affects everything from people hiring and producing jobs in this country to the activities we see overseas as they relate to our foreign relations.

What we need in this Nation is new leadership in November that has the courage and the will to address the most major issue this Nation faces, which is fiscal reform. With that, we will put this malaise in the rearview mirror and again be able to focus on being a great nation.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, for 3 consecutive fiscal years, the leadership in the Senate majority party has consciously decided not to bring a budget to the floor of the Senate. Do you know what the result has been? We have spent \$10.6 trillion and increased our debt over \$4 trillion, while the American people have cut their debt, cut their spending, and gotten their house in order during our worst recession since the Great Depression.

It is time that the leadership of the Senate took a lesson from the American people. Let's get back to the business of America. Let's get a budget to the floor. Let's balance our budget.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. JOHANNIS. Mr. President, think about it—\$5 trillion of new debt under this President. So when he submits a budget plan, what happens to it? On the floor of this Senate, the President's budget plan did not get a single vote. No Republican, no Democrat, no Independent supported the President. What happened on the House side? The same identical thing—no Republican, no Democrat, no Independent supported the President's plan. Many are working on this. Simpson-Bowles is a good example. Many of my colleagues have been working to find a way forward on our budget issues. And what happens on the floor of the Senate? No budget. Four years, no budget.

When Republicans come to the majority, we will pass a budget, we will work to balance our budget. That is where we are headed.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. JOHNSON of Wisconsin. Mr. President, in 1987, our total Federal debt stood at \$2.3 trillion. It took us 200 years as a Nation to incur \$2.3 trillion in debt. Last year, with the debt ceiling debate, we increased our debt limit by a little more than \$2 trillion. We will blow through that limit in less than 2 years. The President of the United States has put forward four budgets. He has yet to submit any proposals to save either Social Security or Medicare. We are facing the most predictable financial crisis in our Nation and our President refuses to lead, this Senate refuses to lead. America hungers for leadership.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, it is bad enough that this Senate's Leadership, led by the Democrats, has not passed a budget in 3½ years. What is even worse than that is the fact they have not offered a budget in this Congress. They have not voted for or supported a single budget in this Congress. We have had, of course, one budget voted on in the Senate during this Congress, written by a Democrat. That was the President's plan, which received zero votes from his own party, zero votes from the Republican Party last year and this year.

If we are able to come to the table, if we are to come to a compromise, we have to have offers on both sides. We have to have a plan on both sides. So all the calls for civility, all the calls for a compromise fall on deaf ears unless or until we have two willing parties at the table with proposals they are willing to offer.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, the American people are asking two big questions: Why has the Senate not acted to stop the \$4½ trillion tax hike that will occur on January 12 unless we act; and, second, why has the Senate not voted to replace the across-the-board defense cuts that will devastate our national security? The unfortunate answer is because Senate Democrats and the Obama administration are too afraid to tackle, let alone vote on, the tough issues in an election year.

For Americans outside the Beltway, the consequences are very serious. The Congressional Budget Office tells us that failure to avoid this fiscal cliff will shrink the economy next year and push unemployment above 9 percent. That means 2 million jobs will be lost and we will be back in recession.

The House has acted. Election year or not, there is no excuse for the Senate to not follow the House's action, its lead, to avoid the job-killing consequence of this fiscal cliff.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, it is astounding to me that after putting the Nation through the self-inflicted travesty of last year's debt ceiling debacle that we are facing another manufactured crisis this year. With a fiscal cliff that never would have existed if the Senate had remained in session, had fewer recesses, and maximized every legislative day, based on the job we were elected to do, as I have argued virtually throughout this entire Congress.

According to a recent study, illustrated by this chart, deferring last year's debt ceiling to the eleventh hour in August produced the highest level of policy uncertainty of any event that occurred over the last 20 years. That includes 9/11, the financial crisis, the fall of Lehman, and the Iraq war.

We have now heard from CBO as well as Fed Chairman Bernanke. Both have

indicated we could trigger another recession next year if we fail to address the fiscal cliff. Yet here we are in the Senate in September scheduled to adjourn sometime this week for nearly 2 months after just returning from a 5-week break. When I was running for reelection in 2000 when the Republicans were in the majority, we had our last vote on November 1 and did not adjourn until November 3, a few days before the election.

I call on the majority leader to have us remain in session to lay the groundwork for a bipartisan solutions on these monumental issues. I have urged this in a letter I sent last April, because it is absolutely pivotal for this country. If we had not had the policy uncertainty of 2006 through 2011, we would have 2½ million more jobs in America today.

The Senate has wasted years, 2 precious years in the life of America with intransigence and inaction. America deserves better.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, the problems in front of our country are not unsolvable. As a matter of fact, every one of them is solvable. Our country has a history of doing hard things. What we lack is leadership to call us to do those hard things. We find ourselves at a point in time when the greatest threat to our Nation is our debt and our economy. We are risking our future, not only our future economically, but our future of liberty. What we have had, I would remind my colleagues, is a history in the Senate of doing hard things. Under the leadership of Senator REID, the Senate has not attempted to do hard things. What it has attempted to do is abandon the tasks that should be in front of us.

America deserves better. It deserves better leadership. It deserves leadership based on bringing this country together rather than dividing this country. Not having a fiscal plan to solve the greatest issues in front of our country is an absolute failure of leadership. Where is the Senate majority leader's, where is the President's plan to solve our problems?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, the fact is our economy could be booming right now, should be booming right now. The history of this country is that after a serious recession, the economy comes roaring back. That is exactly what should be happening right now. In fact, our economy should be creating more jobs than there are people to fill them. But that is not what is happening because of the failed leadership of the Democratic majority in control of this body and the President of the United States.

Our economy cannot come back the way it should as long as the threat of a complete fiscal disaster looms over it. As long as everybody who might even be contemplating launching a new

business or expanding an existing business knows this government is running trillion dollar deficits as far as the eye can see with no willingness to address this, then people will not make that investment. They will not expand their business. They will not hire that next worker.

It is long past time that the Democratic leadership in this body accepts its responsibility to address this problem, pass a budget, get our fiscal house in order so this economy can grow again and Americans can get back to work.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, 2 years ago we extended the 2010 tax rates. Over a year ago, we passed the Budget Control Act, which will trigger sequestration unless we pass a budget reduction plan. The point is we have known about the fiscal cliff for a long time, and there has been no shortage of warnings about the dire economic consequences of doing nothing. But that is, in fact, what this body has done, nothing. So let me say this. There is a reason President Obama and my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are targeting the Romney plan and the Ryan plan and the Republican plan. It is because they do not have a plan. They do not even have an excuse for what this body has not done.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, we talk about plans and budgets. The reality is these bigger concepts that we discuss in our Nation's capital have real consequences on the everyday lives of Americans. I spoke a few weeks ago to a Rotary club in Junction City, KS, and the local CPA was in the audience. We got to questions and answers, and he said: Senator, I have a question for you. This is a softball. What is the estate tax rate going to be next year?

It is embarrassing not to be able to answer the simple questions about what is going to happen in people's lives. People are having to make decisions. That certified public accountant, that lawyer, that financial planner needs to be able to explain to that farmer in Kansas, to that rancher, to that small business owner what the Tax Code is going to look like.

We are facing a point in time in which we have no opportunities to tell someone what the Tax Code is going to be in 3 months. That is embarrassing. When people ask me what is necessary to get Washington, DC, to work together for us to solve the country's problems and move forward, the answer is we desperately need leadership, someone who shows us the way, encourages us to come together. It has been lacking. It is embarrassing to me for the nearly 2 years I have been a Member of the Senate not to see that leadership exhibited in the United States of America.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, this week my home State of Mississippi received the sobering news that its economy had slipped back into recession. Frankly, I'm concerned that my State might be a harbinger for the rest of the country.

Despite national efforts to create new jobs and opportunities, our economy is not getting significantly better. It is a problem in most States. Unemployment has remained over 8 percent for more than 3 years despite spending nearly a trillion dollars with the President's 2009 stimulus package.

Investments and small business growth have languished with a weak economy and with tax policies and Federal regulations that seem to have made matters worse. The course we are on is simply not good enough. We urge the Senate to make a strong stand. Let's get together. Let's push a simple, easy-to-follow game plan for economic recovery.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, last night I came to the floor to object to a 1-hour debate on a measure that would have had Draconian effects on our relations with countries in the Middle East. I am not opposed to that measure or debating it. But I said I would think it would be important to have an amendment. The majority leader of the Senate said: The day of amendments here is over. The majority leader of the Senate said: The day of amendments in this body is over.

Is there a more telling description of how this body has deteriorated and degenerated over the years?

I see my friend from Maine here. It is a far cry from the day we first came, when other majority leaders would allow debate, amendments, and carry out the functions the people ask us to, and that is with vigorous debate and discussion. The day of amendments in this body is over.

So as we debated a bill for veterans jobs programs, of which six are already existing, the majority leader, for the first time in 50 years—for the first time in 50 years in this body—we are not taking up the Defense authorization bill. We are in a war. We continue to have attacks on American citizens. America's national security is at risk. And we cannot even do enough for the men and women who are serving to pass legislation that is so vital to their future and their ability to defend this Nation? Shameful.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, our troops are fighting and being attacked in Afghanistan. Iran marches toward the capability of having a nuclear weapon. Terrorists have been murdering our diplomats. Innocent civilians are being murdered in Syria by a despotic regime. The world is a dangerous place.

President Obama, stop leading from behind. President Obama, lead this ef-

fort. Right now our military faces devastating cuts about which your own Secretary of Defense has said we would be shooting ourselves in the head, that we would be undermining our national security for generations. We have heard what is happening in the world. Lead. Be the Commander in Chief. Your leadership has been absent. You have been AWOL on this critical issue and our troops and our Nation deserve better.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, lucky you to be presiding today.

We live in interesting times. You can receive a Nobel Peace Prize for not being somebody else. Now, 4 years later almost after the Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded, where do we stand as a Nation? In case you have not heard, bin Laden is dead. That is good. That is a great accomplishment. The President should take pride in that. We should all celebrate the death of that evil man. But that is not foreign policy. Is anybody deterred from attacking America's interest in the Middle East because bin Laden is dead? Is anybody saying: I better not go over the wall of that Embassy in Egypt because we killed bin Laden? There is no coherent foreign policy at a time when we need one.

Four years later, after a charm offensive and an apology tour that has not worked, our enemies are on steroids and our friends are unsure about who we are. I will make a prediction: If this continues, the world is going to devolve into chaos, because at a time when we need to be certain, we are unsure. The Iranians are not taking anything we say seriously and the Russians and the Chinese have corrupted the U.N. So much for restarting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I rise to state the Senate's lack of leadership in addressing sequestration will have long-term effects on our Nation's robust intelligence community which had to be rebuilt after 9/11. These budget cuts will make it very difficult for the intelligence community to keep Americans safe in future years.

America hungers for leadership and, unfortunately, the Senate lacks leadership from the majority on these issues that affect the safety of all Americans.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I rise to urge the Senate to fully investigate the circumstances regarding the attack upon our U.S. consulate in Benghazi and the torture and killing of our Ambassador, the deaths of three American patriots and the following attacks and deaths involving marines in Afghanistan.

Americans are watching a conflagration of an estimated one-half million jihadists in over 30 countries, burning portraits of our President, American

flags, and threatening attacks upon our consulates and embassies while shouting "Death to America." No, Mr. President and my colleagues, the war against terrorism is not over. We find out now, 10 days later, that al-Qaida was involved in the planned attack in Benghazi, and dangerous protests continue in Pakistan and throughout the Muslim world.

This morning, the Commandant of our Marine Corps informed the Capitol Hill marines there are 153 marine units at the ready to protect U.S. consulates and embassies at the direction of the State Department. They should be deployed, and he believes the current danger may well last decades.

The sobering truth hurts. Was there actionable intelligence prior to this attack? If there was not, why not, especially given recent intelligence reports, press reports and testimony by Matthew Olsen, National Counterterrorism Center Director.

We are on a merry-go-round of excuses with this administration. There is no strong horse or weak horse. It is a merry-go-round that has to stop.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, today we have heard a lot about the financial condition of this country, and certainly that is foremost on the minds of everyone. It is in the forefront. But in addition, there are national security issues in the world, and, unfortunately, they have been pushed to the back page because of the condition of this country. But I wish to talk for a minute about the national security of the United States. It is something we need to focus on no matter what is happening domestically.

I wish to focus on one small part of our national security. Certainly, we have issues going on in 30 different countries, and a number of those have our embassies under siege. We have had an ambassador killed in recent weeks. This is a foreign policy that is in shambles. In the Middle East, it is a foreign policy of apology, it is a foreign policy of appeasement, it is a foreign policy of dithering and looking the other way. This cannot go on.

Iran continues down a course which is going to force a confrontation with Israel. Israel is the most reliable ally America has—certainly in the region and perhaps in the world. We need a President who will stand and be clear and be firm about what is going to happen if Iran keeps going down the road it is going. That is not happening. It needs to happen.

We need to change foreign policy from a policy of apology to a policy of leadership.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, the events of this past week are a very clear and direct reminder to us of the need to choose to end our Nation's dependence on imported oil. I will remind my colleagues this is our choice. It is

within our power to free ourselves from reliance on OPEC oil.

In these past few months, I have had an opportunity to visit our oil resources in the Gulf of Mexico, in North Dakota with Bakken shale, up in Alaska with the offshore as well as ANWR, and National Petroleum Reserve out in the Marcellus shale. We have learned one thing for sure: There is no scarcity of resources in this country. Technological breakthroughs allow us to access these resources in a safe and reliable manner.

This administration may talk a good game on oil production, but words and actions are entirely different. Our problems result from a federal government that has actions and inactions that indefinitely delay, if not prohibit, in many cases, access to our energy resources.

We are not running out of energy. What we are running out of are excuses for continued reliance on OPEC.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, just yesterday, the White House went out and applauded the fact that Saudi Arabia is producing more oil. The President goes to Brazil and tells the President of Brazil we want to be their No. 1 customer. This is at the same time this White House is blocking American energy projects and American energy jobs.

Held hostage by environmental extremists, this President continues to block and cause people to lose jobs in the United States. Earlier this week, the No. 3 coal producer in the country announced the layoff of 1,200 workers. So not only are Americans who are working in American energy losing their jobs, the President's policies continue to block new jobs from being created. The President continues to stand in blockade of the Keystone XL Pipeline, which would bring back thousands of good-paying, family-wage jobs. Yet the President says no.

HARRY REID, the majority leader, stands at that desk and he blocks over a dozen bills passed by the House of Representatives that are good American energy jobs that will put people back to work.

Republicans stand ready to produce more American energy, which will put people back to work, will stimulate our economy, and will help lower energy costs for American families. The American people deserve better than they are getting from the Democratic majority in the Senate and from the Democratic President of the United States.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, the price of gasoline at the pump is double what it was 4 years ago. The majority in this Senate has done nothing to address that problem, and this administration has done nothing to address that problem. In fact, we are moving in the wrong direction.

The President's 5-year lease plan for offshore leases is half what the previous plan was. Production in the gulf is down following his imposed moratorium and it is beginning to go down further. It has gone from 1.55 million barrels a day in 2010 to 1.32 in 2011, and it is still headed down to 1.23 in this year. Two years before the moratorium, the Energy Information Administration, where all these numbers come from, said it would be 1.76 million barrels a day this year.

We are the most energy rich country in the world, but this Senate majority, this administration will not allow us to access our own resources for our own good.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, look at what is going on in the Middle East. We have more than 20 countries demonstrating with anti-American protests. Look at countries such as Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Yemen. Look at what is going on in Iraq. Yet at the same time we continue to import our energy from the Middle East. So look at what is going on in the Middle East at the same time we are dependent on them for our energy, when we can produce that energy right here at home and work with our closest friend and ally in the world—Canada—and when we can create American jobs.

This is an opportunity. We can produce more energy in this country. We can create jobs. We can get this economy going, and we don't have to be dependent on the Middle East. It just takes the will to move forward with the energy plan we have proposed, but we need an administration that will work with us to advance that energy plan.

Gas prices, which affect every working person, every consumer, every family, every business in this country, for the month of September are the highest they have ever been for any month of September. What does that do to American pocketbooks?

This is an opportunity. This is an opportunity we need to reach out and grab with both hands. The only question I can ask is: Why aren't we? Why isn't this Senate acting on that right now and why isn't this administration working with us? Why do veterans have to come back from the Middle East and go to Canada to get a job to work on something such as the Keystone Pipeline? Because the administration is blocking it in this country. The question I have is: Why?

We need to get going on this right now. The American people deserve that.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, Americans have endured 4 years of the worst recession in the last 70 years in this country. We have 23 million Americans either unemployed or underemployed, and millions more have simply given up finding a job. What is the Presi-

dent's response in the face of all this? Reject every plan presented by Republicans and, instead, spend \$5 trillion of borrowed money leading—so-called leading—our country into decline and ultimately into bankruptcy.

What is the Democratically led Senate's response? Avoid all efforts to formulate a plan to address this problem and to vote and debate on that plan on one of the most critical—if not the most critical—issues facing this country in its history. The American public is desperate for new leadership, both from the White House and from the Senate—leadership that is absolutely necessary if we are to restore our Nation to growth and prosperity and get our people back to work.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, yesterday the New York Times said this: "The 112th Congress is set to enter the Congressional record books as the least productive body in a generation."

This is true, and the responsibility falls squarely at the feet of the Democratic Senate leadership. The Senate has taken just 193 recorded votes this year. The Senate has been more than 3 years since passing a budget. The majority leader has shut off the right to amend a record number of times. The majority leader has filled the amendment tree a record 66 times—more than his 6 predecessors in the Senate who did it a total of 40 times. The majority leader has shut off the right to debate. He calls up a bill, he files cloture on it, and then he has the audacity to call that a filibuster.

In short, the Democrats have failed to pass a budget, have failed to do a single appropriations bill, and have failed to consider a Defense authorization bill when we have troops in harm's way. America needs new leadership.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, a number of our colleagues have already spoken about the huge problems we face and the President's complete failure to lead. We have a \$16 trillion debt, millions out of work, the biggest tax hike in history looming, and our military faces crippling across-the-board cuts.

The Nation and the world need strong American leadership and robust political institutions to meet these challenges. But the President, with a lot of help from the Democratically controlled Senate, has deliberately chosen inaction. Why?

Over the past 2 years, the Democratic Senate has seen itself as an extension of the President's reelection campaign rather than a forum for solving the Nation's problems. Everything it has and hasn't done is meant to help the President, not the American people. So our problems have only gotten worse. And the Senate has of course completely broken down as an institution, as described by the Senator from Mississippi.

Democrats haven't passed a budget in more than 3 years despite the fact that, as Senator SESSIONS pointed out, the law literally requires it. It doesn't say, Don't pass a budget if it is hard; don't pass a budget if you have to negotiate with the House; don't pass a budget if you have to vote. It says, Pass a budget.

We haven't passed a single appropriations bill, I say to my friend, the senior Senator from Mississippi. Apparently all these people on the Appropriations Committee are completely irrelevant. Senator ALEXANDER pointed out they did their work but are never going to bring up a single bill.

By the way, it is not just the Appropriations Committee. All Senators are on committees. Does any Senator remember the last time they actually marked up a bill? Most committees are not marking up bills and not offering amendments. So I guess the new rule is: No amendments in committee and no amendments on the floor.

There are a lot of Senators around here of both parties wondering what their job is. I was elected by the people of my State. What is this job I have? I am on committees that don't do anything. Nobody votes on amendments. All the legislation we have, if we have any, is written in the majority leader's office.

Senator ISAKSON or Senator ENZI pointed out that all we do is vote on bills that have fancy titles and a poison pill and, of course, only one vote. Because you know, if you get on the bill, there won't be any amendments. So a lot of Members wonder why they are here. They fought hard for these jobs, defeated intelligent, well-funded opponents, got here ready to go to work, and nothing happens. And it is not just 1 week or a month or 6 months, but 2 years.

As Senator MCCAIN pointed out, no Defense authorization bill. We had managed to get around to doing that, no matter what our differences were, for half a century. This Democratically controlled Senate gives do-nothing Congresses a bad name. It is a complete disgrace. Never before has a Senate and a President done less to address such great challenges that we have.

I know I can speak for every single member of the Republican Conference in the Senate. Regardless of our philosophical differences with our friends on the other side, we take our jobs seriously. We think the people who sent us here expected us to function, and we intend to do so.

So if the American people decide they want to make a change, the commitment I make to them is the Republican Conference is going to pass a budget. It may be hard; we may have to twist a few arms; there may be some people who don't want to do it. We may have to do it on a partisan basis if our friends on the other side don't want to join with us. But the law doesn't say, Don't do it if it is hard. It says, Do it.

The Appropriations Committee deals with the discretionary budget of the

U.S. Government. It ought to be allowed to do its job. Not everybody is going to vote for every bill, but we are going to function.

We owe it to the American people to do, at the very least, the basic work of government. Of course, we have problems beyond the basic work of government. Certainly we were going to have differences after the 2010 election—which could best be described as a national restraining order.

The American people took a look at what this government did under this President's leadership over the first 2 years, and they said, We have had enough of that. They flipped the House of Representatives and made us a more robust minority in the Senate. They understood we weren't going to do any more of what we did the first 2 years. They were not interested in any more of that. But that is not an excuse for not doing anything. They said, We don't want to do any more of all this new stuff that was done in 2009 and 2010, the massive spending and debt and the takeover of health care and the nationalization of the student loan bills.

But they didn't send us here to do nothing. They assumed we would at least do the things we ought to be able to agree on—the basic work of government. It is embarrassing.

For the sake of this institution and for the sake of our country, we need to straighten out this place. We need an attitude change. This is not about the rules. The rules have remained largely the same over the years. This is about us. And this problem can be fixed. All we have to do is decide to operate differently. No matter who is up or who is down, there are basic things this institution owes the American people; that is, to get the basic work of government done.

So the pledge we make to the American people, if they decide they want to try new leadership in the Senate, is we will do these things even if they are hard.

Beyond the basics, let me say to our friends on the other side, we have big problems we are never going to be able to solve without some bipartisan commitment to do it. We are drowning in a sea of debt. We know we cannot save this country unless we make the entitlement programs fit the demographics of our country.

We have a lot of other problems. We have taxes, we have sequester. But the way I tend to think of that is those are the chairs on the Titanic. You can rearrange the chairs—figure out the tax problems, figure out the sequester problems—but the ship is still going down unless we make our entitlement programs meet and fit the demographics of our country. We probably won't be able to do that one party only. It is time for some statesmen to show up.

We have had an election every 2 years since 1788, right on schedule. At any point in American history, people could have said, Oh, we can't do that;

there is an election coming up. There is always an election coming up in America. That is what we do. The fact that we have an election coming up is not an excuse for not tackling the tough problems.

So no matter what the American people decide this November, no matter what they decide, the problems are there. And our commitment to the American people is, if we are in the majority, we will do the basic work of government; and our hand will be out to our colleagues on the other side and whoever the President of the United States is.

It is time to tackle the biggest problems in the country, the most predictable crisis in American history.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, has the Republicans' time expired?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republicans have 3 minutes remaining.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I will yield back the remainder of our time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

SELF-CREATED RESULTS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I haven't been able to watch all the speeches by my friends on the other side of the aisle, but I have watched enough to understand what is going on. This has been a remarkable show of hubris or arrogance from the Republican side of the aisle.

One after another, the Republicans have stood to complain about how the Senate hasn't gotten a lot done. The Presiding Officer has been one of the leaders in having a more effective Senate, because my friend, the Presiding Officer, has watched what the Republicans have done. We are going to do something about it. The Presiding Officer knows that, I know that.

What they have done is the very definition of chutzpah. The nerve. What nerve. They are complaining about a result that they themselves created. They have created the fact that we haven't gotten anything done. They are good at it. A bill that would allow veterans to get jobs, they stopped it on a technicality. They have conducted filibuster after filibuster, blocking one bill after another, and then they complain the Senate can't pass anything when they are the ones holding things up. The record is pretty detailed and deep, and I am not going to cover it all today because, really, it is significant.

I said here yesterday, I have been the leader for 6 years. I may be off 1 or 2, but I have had to file motions to overcome 382 filibusters in 6 years. I know the Senate has changed a little bit since Lyndon Johnson was the majority leader, but during the 6 years he was the majority leader, he had to file cloture once. To think that they are here complaining we are not getting