

Most people did not expect that. It is an example where this budget actually went further in terms of trying to, again, tax people more and therefore have less growth than anyone expected. Most people thought it would go from 15 percent to 20 percent or 25 percent, but not all of the way to—almost tripling the tax on dividends.

So it is an example where, in this budget, there was an opportunity to lay out a pro-growth path that included tax reform. Instead, we are building on our current antiquated, inefficient tax system and just lopping more taxes on top, including taxes on capital gains and on dividends that will make it more difficult for us to have the kind of investment we need to get this economy moving again.

The President, when he ran for election in 2008, pledged to reform entitlements. Senator TOOMEY talked about the fact that he has continued to talk about that, the need for it. I certainly agree with that, as do, by the way, most of my colleagues in the Senate, Democrat and Republican alike.

The budget, of course, does nothing to help. In fact, it increases the cost significantly on entitlements, as Senator TOOMEY has said, an 8-percent increase on average for these important programs. But that puts them on an unsustainable footing when the economy will not be growing nearly that fast.

Instead of doing something to reform these programs, making them work better, the President is just continuing to pile on more entitlements. But in 2008 the President also said he was going to cut the deficit in half. At that time the deficit that first year of his administration was \$1.4 trillion. He proposed to cut it in half over the 4-year term. So now we are in 2012, the final of his 4 years—fiscal year—and their estimate for the deficit this year—from the Office of Management and Budget, from the Congressional Budget Office—is that we will be over \$1.3 trillion.

So it does not sound like he has cut the deficit in half. Some will say, well, it is less as a percent of our economy. That is true. Our economy has grown some. But it is still not close to cutting it in half. A lot of things happen during a Presidential term. But I would hope that the President, in putting forward a budget, would have put forward a serious effort to reduce the deficit significantly, to get this economy back on track and prepare for, again, this unsustainable growth in entitlements by truly reforming the programs to make them work better and to make them sustainable over time.

We still have the opportunity to do that in the Senate. It is an election year, but we still have 8 or 9 months until the election. We should get busy working together as Republicans and Democrats, not follow the President's budget because, unfortunately, it does not provide the guidance we need. But we need to follow what all of us know

in our hearts has to be done, which is grow the economy through pro-growth, sensible approaches such as tax reform, regulatory relief, and using more of our own natural resources in this country. We can help grow the economy on the one hand and, therefore, create revenue.

Then, second, we ought to do everything we can to reform these programs to make them sustainable, to reduce annually appropriated spending in ways that are responsible—not just to our kids and grandkids, as important as that is, but to today's economy to ensure that we can, indeed, have a strong recovery that all of us hope for and begin to bring people back to the workforce, create jobs, get this economy moving again, and give people that dignity and self-respect that comes from work.

I am glad to have had the opportunity to talk about this budget.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant editor of the Daily Digest proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION ACT

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I thank the Chair for his leadership. I am here today to appeal to this body. I think the Presiding Officer, I know myself, and a whole host of folks in this body have been concerned about where the country is going. I know many of us have talked about ways of reforming our Medicare system at some point, which I realize may not happen this year, and our Medicaid system, and to move our country to a place where it works fiscally for all Americans. We have talked about all kinds of things. Shoot, I think there have been over 50 or 60 Senators involved in trying to reach consensus on those issues.

Today, we are debating a highway bill. I know we have had a lot of great work that has taken place in EPW, a lot of great work in the Commerce Committee, in the Banking Committee, and in the Finance Committee. What we have done in this bill—and I so appreciate our leadership allowing us to look at this bill in this way—is to move to one portion of the bill and then adding other portions on to the bill. So I thank the leadership of the Senate for letting us look at the bill in this way.

I know there are provisions in the Finance component that are being worked out now before the Finance piece comes to the floor, and again I appreciate the people working on that. But it was my understanding—and I think I am right—that the major components of that Finance work were not supposed to change, yet here we are

and what we are getting ready to do with this highway bill is pretty unbelievable.

All of us want to see infrastructure in this country built. I know the Senator from Maryland is a strong proponent of that and has lobbied heavily for that. I was the mayor of a city at a time when it seemed we had nothing but orange barrels, so I thought it was very important we had proper infrastructure.

But with all of the consensus that has developed in the Senate around trying to solve our big issues, here is what we are doing. And many people on the other side of the aisle—my friends—can remember the debate during health care. One of the things that many people on my side of the aisle argued was a problem with the health care bill was that we were going to use 6 years worth of cost and 10 years worth of revenue. That was one of the things that actually got a lot of people's attention and concerned people on both sides of the aisle. What we are doing with this bill is even more egregious. What we are doing with this highway bill is we have 2 years' worth of cost and 10 years of revenue.

Again, I know all of us want to see a highway bill put in place. I think most of us want to see a long-term highway bill put in place. But let me explain what is happening. The Senator from Maryland and I, every year or so, have to deal with something called SGR. It is the sustainability growth rate for Medicare. We put a formula in place back in 1997, but we haven't owned up to that. So what we do every year and a half or so is we kick the can further down the road and we create what is called a financial cliff at the end of it. Every time we deal with that, it gets more and more expensive.

I understand people here in the Senate don't want to support physicians across their States, so we keep kicking the can down the road and not finding a way for a long-term solution that all of us know needs to be in place. I personally understand how people are concerned with how we reform Medicare. It affects a lot of seniors in our States, and we want to make sure we do that in the right way.

What I don't understand is why on this highway bill, which has a trust set up—and by the way, it doesn't have the same type of constituency. I shouldn't be talking politics, but it doesn't. We deal with all of our Governors back home. But why on this highway bill are we creating exactly the same problem for our highway program that we have with SGR? What we are effectively doing, if we pass this bill in the way the Finance Committee has come up with paying for it, is we have created exactly the problem we have with SGR. I cannot imagine why anyone in this body wants to see us take one problem and transfer it to something else that so many of our Governors and people across our country depend upon.

So here we are, in a situation where we all know our fiscal situation is not

sustainable, we know we have to make changes—and I realize it is very unlikely those changes are going to happen this year—and yet we would go ahead and do what I think is unbelievably irresponsible, which is that we would go ahead and pass this highway bill where we are going to spend all the money in 2 years and pay for it over 10. So I am here to appeal to people on both sides of the aisle.

This is a bipartisan issue. It is a bipartisan bill. This isn't one of those things where one side of the aisle is trying to pass something over the objections of the other side of the aisle. But I want to appeal to the conscience of the people in this body, to the moral high ground that sometimes this body can exhibit in representing the American people, that we not do the same kind of thing we have done with SGR—the doc fix and Medicare—to the highway bill. We ought to spend the amount of money we have coming in. If we don't think that is enough money to pay for it annually, we ought to change the way the revenue structure is coming into the program.

There is no way in the world households in Maryland or Tennessee or any other place would possibly consider doing this. We know fiscally this doesn't work. Financially, it doesn't work. So I am hopeful enough people in this body will put aside expediency, put aside making everybody feel good back home in the short term, and not create a crisis.

By the way, at the end of 2013, if we pass this bill as it is laid out now by the Finance Committee—even with the tweak they are looking at on IRAs—what we are looking at doing is putting in place a \$10 billion cliff.

Again, I think it is unbelievably irresponsible that we would transfer the same woes we have in our entitlement programs to the highway program. We ought to either spend the amount of money that is coming in annually and reduce the amount of outflows or we ought to do something different with the gas tax or some other revenue stream. But we should not put our heads in the sand and say, even though we know this doesn't work, it is an election year and we want to get a highway bill behind us. We know it is going to be bad news for our country down the road, but it is good news for us today. To me, that is irresponsible. So I am appealing to both sides of the aisle. I am appealing to all those people who have been to numerous meetings trying to figure out a bipartisan way—not as Republicans or Democrats, but in a bipartisan way—we can deal with our country's financial problems in an appropriate way, a pragmatic way, that doesn't jerk the rug out but gets us where we need to go over the next 10 years. I am appealing to all those people who act very sincerely in these meetings and speak with passion about where our country is going. I am appealing to their goodwill. I am appealing to their conscience. I am sug-

gesting that we take the moral high ground and not let a bill pass like this—a bill that uses the same budget gimmickry we have used for so many years and that has put us in the place we are now in.

I hope, in a bipartisan way, we will say, no, stop. Let's do this in the appropriate way that reflects the trust the American people have placed in us to handle their finances, their tax money, and this country.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MOVING AHEAD FOR PROGRESS IN THE 21ST CENTURY ACT—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1813) to reauthorize Federal-aid highway and highway safety construction programs, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Reid (for Johnson (SD)/Shelby) amendment No. 1515, of a perfecting nature.

AMENDMENT NO. 1515 WITHDRAWN

Mr. REID. I withdraw the pending amendment No. 1515.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right. The amendment is withdrawn.

AMENDMENT NO. 1633

Mr. REID. I have a first-degree amendment, which is a perfecting amendment, at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] proposes an amendment numbered 1633.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

(The text of the amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

Mr. REID. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have a cloture motion at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk reads as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the

Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the Reid amendment No. 1633 to S. 1813, a bill to reauthorize Federal-aid highway and highway safety construction programs, and for other purposes:

Harry Reid, John D. Rockefeller IV, Kay R. Hagan, Patrick J. Leahy, Patty Murray, Sheldon Whitehouse, Richard Blumenthal, Herb Kohl, Ben Nelson, Jeff Bingaman, Jeanne Shaheen, Barbara A. Mikulski, Jack Reed, Max Baucus, Frank R. Lautenberg, Robert Menendez, Maria Cantwell.

Mr. REID. I ask that the mandatory quorum required under rule XXII be waived.

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

AMENDMENT NO. 1634 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1633

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now have a second-degree amendment which is at the desk that I ask to be reported.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] proposes an amendment numbered 1634 to amendment No. 1633.

The amendment is as follows:

At the end, add the following:

(e) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This division shall become effective 4 days after enactment.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT WITH AMENDMENT NO. 1635

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have a motion to recommit the bill with instructions at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] moves to recommit the bill (S. 1813) to the Committee on Environment and Public Works with instructions to report back forthwith with an amendment No. 1635.

The amendment is as follows:

At the end, add the following new section:
SEC. ____.

This Act shall become effective 3 days after enactment.

Mr. REID. I ask for the yeas and nays on that motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 1636

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have an amendment to the instructions at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] proposes an amendment numbered 1636 to the instructions on the motion to recommit.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent further reading be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

In the amendment, strike "3 days" and insert "2 days".

Mr. REID. I ask for the yeas and nays on that amendment.