

and explains things so well. I have great admiration for him.

He wrote yesterday, "Republicans have to realize that they are going to have to cave on tax rates." That is the way it is, "they are going to have to cave on tax rates."

Then on Tuesday, the day before yesterday, the senior Senator from Maine, OLYMPIA SNOWE, urged House Republican leaders to end the suspense for middle-class taxpayers. They shouldn't have to wonder, Senator SNOWE said, whether "we will ultimately raise taxes on low- to middle-income people." I assure them, we won't raise taxes on the middle class and the poor. That is what OLYMPIA SNOWE said.

On Wednesday, Senator SUSAN COLLINS joined her colleague from Maine, agreeing the idea of ending the suspense for the middle class "has merit."

Yesterday it seemed every practical Republican left in Washington was suddenly willing to say out loud what we have known for weeks: The only remaining option is for the House to pass the Senate bill. Dozens of House Republicans signed onto a letter urging Speaker BOEHNER to take the last exit before the cliff.

Neither President Obama nor Democrats in Congress have been ambiguous about our proposal to provide economic security for 98 percent of American families and 97 percent of small businesses, while asking the wealthiest 2 percent to contribute a little more to stop this runaway debt.

Now even a dyed-in-the-wool conservative such as Senator COBURN from Oklahoma has endorsed the Democratic approach. Here is what he said:

I know we have to raise revenue. I would rather see the rates go up than eliminate tax credits and deductions that benefit the middle class.

He has been heavily involved in everything that has happened the last several years in Washington dealing with what to do with the debt. When he joins in, that is significant, so it is apparent how this will end. The only question is when will it end. How long will Speaker BOEHNER make middle-class families wait for relief, and how long will he force the financial markets to wait for certainty? The longer he delays, the greater the risk to our economy.

So, JOHN BOEHNER, who is my friend, I urge you, you don't have to listen to me. Listen to your own caucus. Listen to prudent members of your own party and around the country. We can argue whether to give more unnecessary tax breaks to the wealthy tomorrow. We can discuss responsible ways to reduce our deficit next week. We can reform our Tax Code next year, but we must give economic certainty to the middle class now, today. Democrats agree, Independents agree, the majority of Republicans agree, and the American public agrees by a huge margin. Even dozens of CEOs from major corporations, whose personal taxes would go up under our plan, emphatically agree.

I have been saying for weeks the only people who aren't on board are the Republicans in Congress, but now even they are crying out for compromise. I only hope my friend JOHN BOEHNER is listening.

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

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

THE FISCAL CLIFF

Mr. MCCONNELL. Yesterday afternoon I came to the floor and offered President Obama's proposal on the fiscal cliff to show that neither he nor Democrats in Congress are acting in good faith in these negotiations.

With just a few weeks to go before a potentially devastating and entirely avoidable blow to the economy, the President proposed a plan that members of his own party won't even vote for. So I think it is safe to say at this point that the President actually isn't interested in a balanced agreement, he is not particularly interested in avoiding the fiscal cliff, and he is clearly not interested at all in cutting any spending.

What the President is interested in, as we learned yesterday, is getting as much taxpayer money as he can, first by raising taxes on small businesses that he believes are making too much money, and then on everybody else. This is not so he can lower the debt or the deficit but so he can spend to his heart's content. For months the President has been saying all he wants is to raise taxes on the top 2 percent so he can tackle the debt and the deficit.

However, yesterday he finally revealed that is not his true intent. By demanding the power to raise the debt limit whenever he wants by as much as he wants, he showed what he is after is assuming unprecedented power to spend their dollars without any limit at all.

This isn't about getting a handle on deficits or debt for him. It is about spending even more than he already has. Why else would he demand the power to raise the debt limit on his own? And by the way, why on Earth would we ever consider giving a President who has brought us 4 years of trillion-dollar unchecked deficits the au-

thority to borrow? He is the last person who should have limitless borrowing power.

Look, the only way we ever cut spending around here is by using the debate over the debt limit to do it. Now the President wants to remove that spur to cut altogether. Of course, it gets in the way of his spending plans. Well, I assure you it is not going to happen. The American people want Washington to get spending under control, and the debt limit is the best tool we have to make the President take that demand seriously. The American people want us to fight to cut spending. It is a fight they deserve and a fight we are happy to have.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST

Mr. President, I indicated to the majority leader that I was going to propose the following consent. I am prepared to ask for consent to allow the Senate to vote on the President's debt limit proposal. I would ask this either as an amendment to the Russia PNTR measure we will vote on this afternoon or as a freestanding bill, if that is preferred. Therefore, I now ask unanimous consent that it be in order to vote on an amendment, which is the President's debt limit extension proposal that I just described, prior to the passage of the Russia PNTR bill today.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Reserving the right to object, I have been thinking how best to describe what has been going on here on Capitol Hill the last couple of weeks.

Every morning I get up, the first thing I read is the sports page. I am disappointed in the sports page from the Washington Post. It is not nearly as good as it used to be, and the New York Times is not very good either, but I read them. There is always some good news on the sports page. Then I go to the front page to get some of the bad news. I follow sports no matter what it is—basketball, football, baseball, whatever it is—and I have watched very closely.

It is not one of my favorite teams, but it is really fun to watch the New York Jets. Coach Ryan has a problem. He has three quarterbacks: Sanchez, Tim Tebow, and he has a guy by the name of McElroy. He can't decide who their quarterback is going to be. That is the same problem the Republicans are having. Romney is gone, but he is still in the background. We have MCCONNELL and we have BOEHNER. Who is the quarterback, Mr. President? Who is the quarterback?

My friend talks about the trillions of dollars of debt. We just had an election. The people overwhelmingly know why we have this debt. The polling right before the election showed that the vast majority of the American people realized the debt was caused by George Bush. That is a fact.

We will have another jobs report out tomorrow. We had a little problem because of what happened with Hurricane

Sandy, but we still have created about 100,000 new jobs. Private sector job growth has been significant. We are approaching—let's see, it must be about 4 million jobs now that have been created. That doesn't nearly make up for what was lost during the Bush years, but we are making progress.

People in America realize we can no longer have the top-down economy the Republicans so loved during the Bush years and what they wanted to create again with Governor Romney.

I would be happy to take a look at the proposal my friend the Republican leader has shown us if we could come up with something like we did when they created this other furor by refusing to increase the debt, where we had an ability to come here and have a couple of votes to determine if we were going to increase it. If that is what they want to do again, I would be happy to seriously take a look at that and report to the White House and my caucus, but until then I object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The minority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, my friend indicates that there is some confusion about who the quarterback is on the Republican side. Of course, that is quite common when you don't have a White House. But there is no doubt about who the quarterback is on the Democratic side. The quarterback on the Democratic side is the President of the United States. Unfortunately, he keeps throwing interceptions, and we are moving backward and backward and backward away from the goal line. We have \$4 trillion in annual deficits, and my friend from Nevada still wants to blame that on George Bush? And now the President is asking for unlimited—unlimited—authority to borrow whenever he wants to for whatever amount he wants? If the majority leader supports that proposal, I would hope we could work together and get a vote on it to give his Members a chance to express themselves as to whether they think that is a good way forward for our country—to give this President or any other President unlimited authority to borrow as much as he wants at any time he wants from the Chinese or anybody else. That is the question.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, of course, as I said, I will be happy to look at the proposal by my friend, but the President doesn't want to do anything other than what we have done before, and that is where we are now, and that is why I would be happy to take a look at his proposal, because if it is what we did last summer, I would be happy to take a look at that and move forward.

Mr. President, it is not only we Democrats, but we have a long line of Republicans who, as I outlined early on, are recognizing that we need to immediately make sure the middle class and the poor are taken care of without their taxes being increased. We have Representatives COLE, SCOTT; David Brooks, a columnist from the New

York Times; Senators SNOWE, COLLINS, and COBURN; and a long list of Republicans saying let's move on.

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 11:45 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. reserved for speeches by retiring Senators.

The Senator from Colorado.

EXTENDING TAX CUTS

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, I would like to associate myself with the majority leader's remarks. We do need to extend the tax cuts for the middle class as soon as possible. That is clearly the message the American people sent on November 6 in the nationwide election we held.

I also wish to respond to the comments and the conversation between the two leaders over the debt ceiling limit. It is important to recognize that when we raise the debt ceiling, all we are doing is keeping faith with what Congress has already appropriated, what Congress has already made clear we would spend on behalf of our country in all the various ways the Federal Government operates. We cannot afford to have a situation such as we had August before last where we dallied and literally shot our economy and ourselves in the foot by not extending the debt ceiling. We saw the rating agencies lower our national rating for the first time in history. There is a way to do this, to have a mechanism in place so we never again get in a situation where the debt ceiling becomes a point of contention and literally hurts our economy.

So, again, I want to say that the majority leader is on track. Let's extend these middle-class tax cuts right now and bring some certainty and help our economy grow. The majority leader is on point when he shared the numbers. I think we have seen about 5 million jobs created after approaching literally the great recession when President Obama first took office. So let's get that job done.

WIND PRODUCTION TAX CREDIT

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, I have come to the floor this morning, as I have for many mornings, to talk about the wind energy industry and the importance of tax credits. And this is another job I want to see us get done as soon as possible—to extend the wind production tax credit. It expires in less than a month.

This tax credit has been vital for job creation and for our American manufacturing. Literally, the PTC—the production tax credit—has encouraged the creation of tens of thousands of good-paying middle-class jobs, and it has led to millions in capital investment in States such as Colorado. In fact, 48 States have a wind energy industry presence. Along with the capital investments, what we have seen is the development of thousands of megawatts of clean renewable wind power. And if we let this PTC expire, the stakes are very high.

I have come to the floor 24 times to speak to the importance of the PTC and the benefits it provides for families and businesses in every State across the Nation. I am here because the wind PTC is a critical investment in and a downpayment toward a clean energy future—a future at risk if we don't act and act soon. It is not too late to act. It truly isn't. And to give us more motivation, to point out what is at risk, I wish to focus today on the State of Minnesota and direct my remarks to their wind energy industry.

Minnesota, as we know, is the Land of 10,000 Lakes. Although Minnesota's namesake may be its water, it has become a leader in the wind energy industry and a compelling example of the positive effects the PTC can have in a State. Let me share some numbers to make the point.

As of 2011, Minnesota ranks fifth nationally for the most installed wind capacity, with over 2,700 megawatts, and it trails only Illinois, Iowa, California, and Texas. You can see all the blue areas on the map. Those are areas in which there is installed wind operations. In fact, wind energy meets 12.7—I will round that up to 13 percent of the State's energy needs. This ranks fourth among all States. That means they are powering through the wind energy industry the equivalent of 770,000 Minnesota homes, and that number is going up. It is growing.

We know through our two colleagues from Minnesota that Minnesotans take pride in everything having to do with Minnesota, and well they should. And they are taking pride in being in the forefront of wind power growth. Since 2003 Minnesotans have purchased 1 billion kilowatt hours of energy through Windsource, which is Minnesota's voluntary green power program. It means over 20,000 residents and about 240 businesses pay a little extra on their electric bill to support wind energy and show their commitment to a clean energy economy. I know this works because we have a similar program in Colorado. Excel also has a presence in Colorado, and they offer Windsource to Coloradans.

Now, Minnesota's prominence as a wind power State has been aided by the fact that it also has a successful wind manufacturing industry, and those manufacturing facilities in Minnesota have created hundreds of good-paying jobs and new investments. Federal incentives, including the PTC, have