

raised just under \$1.3 trillion in total revenue. By comparison, that is equivalent to the U.S. Federal deficit for fiscal year 2011 alone. But that was over all those years—100 years. And keep in mind, the loss is \$1.1 trillion, and yet all it has raised is \$1.3 trillion. So think it through.

I have some news for those seeking to engage in class warfare. The death tax does not reduce income and wealth inequality. Perversely, the estate tax creates a barrier to income and wealth mobility.

In an interview this past year with the Associated Press, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Kathleen Merrigan described an epidemic of sorts that is hitting our farmlands across the United States. She did not talk about rising fuel prices or droughts. Instead, Secretary Merrigan discussed how our country's farmers and ranchers are getting older and fewer young people are taking their place. I have heard time and time again that the death tax is the No. 1 reason family farms and businesses fail to pass down to the next generation.

Consider also that heirs are often forced to sell an asset of the farm in order to meet this arbitrary tax. These assets are likely generating revenue and could be a vital part of the family farm. But because of the death tax, family farms and ranches are instead forced to sell these assets or sell the farm to pay the death tax.

This chart shows just in a few States the drought-stricken farmers who are at risk for the death tax in 2013. I have chosen to show South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, California, Wyoming, and Montana. You can see the percentages.

As you can see from the chart, in South Dakota, farms over \$5 million, 15 percent, farms over \$1 million, 49 percent; in Nebraska, farms over \$5 million, 16 percent, farms over \$1 million, 49 percent; Iowa, farms over \$5 million, 15 percent, farms over \$1 million, 47 percent; California, farms over \$5 million, 11 percent, farms over \$1 million, 42 percent; Wyoming—just so I do not leave out the Intermountain West—farms over \$5 million are 8 percent of the farms, farms over \$1 million are 33 percent. Or take Montana: Farms over \$5 million are 7 percent of the farms, and farms over \$1 million, 30 percent.

We ought to repeal the death tax. I do not want these farmers to have to sell the farm to pay the death tax. It might make sense in a college social justice seminar, but it has no place in serious discussions about fiscal policy; that is, the death tax.

Recently, the Joint Committee on Taxation released an estimate on how many more taxable estates, farming taxable estates, and small business taxable estates would be affected by the increase in the death tax over the next 10 years. This chart I have in the Chamber shows that.

The numbers are astonishing. If Congress does not act, we will see more than 15 times the number of taxable es-

tates, more than 13 times the number of small business taxable estates, and a whopping 24 times the number of farming taxable estates. And to add fuel to the fire, farmers already have to recoup the economic losses incurred from the recession.

This is kicking farmers and ranchers while they are down. The recent droughts—and that is what this other chart shows—have caused an unprecedented economic hardship. If we decrease the exemption amount for the death tax from \$5 million to \$1 million, just look at how many more farms will possibly be exposed to the death tax in certain drought-stricken areas.

As you can see on the chart, that central part, shown in the real dark purple or black—whatever that is—that is the big drought area. The States shown in red are not as bad, but they still have very severe drought. The States shown in the darkened area basically are in extreme drought. They have been going through that.

According to the information compiled from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as you can see on that chart, 15 percent of the farms in South Dakota are valued over \$5 million. But look at the number of farms valued over \$1 million—an astonishing 49 percent.

Look at California: 11 percent of the farms are valued at over \$5 million, but 42 percent of the farms are valued at over \$1 million. Then there is Montana where 7 percent of the farms are valued over \$5 million but 30 percent are valued over \$1 million. Not all of these farms will necessarily be impacted by the death tax next year, but I can guarantee you that most of them will down the road.

The fiscal cliff presents us with a pivotal moment. How we tax our citizens is ultimately a question of what we stand for. With respect to the death tax, the question is whether we stand for families and jobs or whether we stand for redistribution regardless of the consequences.

We need to resolve death tax policy. We can no longer afford to put small businesses, family farms, and individuals in a position where each year uncertainty about the death tax rate and exemption amount causes them to divert income away from creating jobs and toward unnecessary death tax planning. This is important stuff, and it is not something we can just blindly or blithely wipe out.

It is time for the President to lead on this issue. The President, tellingly, said when he was running for President in 2008 that his experience running for President was one of the critical bullets on his resume qualifying him for the job. Other than writing and part-time teaching, President Obama has made a career running for office. Well, he will never run for office again, as far as he is concerned. It is time to put aside the campaign and take up the mantle of leadership. It is time to make the tough decisions necessary to get our economy moving again.

Resolving the death tax is a good place to start, and should he decide to lead, he will find partners on both sides of the aisle to join him.

As you can see from those charts, these are serious matters. To have to sell the family farm in order to pay the death tax is not a good thing or to have to borrow to keep it alive is not a good thing. To have to pay heavy insurance rates through the years to be able to pay at least something of the death tax—it may be a better way of trying to help, but it puts these farmers and their families in a real bind.

We should get rid of the whole death tax, but I do not believe our friends on the other side are willing to do that. So then the least we should do is keep the tax rate at 35 percent, with an exemption of \$5 million, doubled to \$10 million for the family. That would help a lot of these farmers keep their farms, it would help our country to still be an agriculture-related country, and it would stop voracious people from hovering over those farms, swooping them up at low rates.

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

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

FAST VOTING ACT

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, like millions of Americans, on November 6, just over a month ago, on election day, I stood at the polls and I cast my vote, and then when I got home I stayed up late to see the results come in. I was still awake when President Obama delivered his acceptance speech. In those remarks, he said:

I want to thank every American who participated in this election, whether you voted for the very first time or waited in line for a very long time. By the way, we have to fix that.

There is so much we have to fix. It was 11:38 p.m. on the east coast when the Associated Press called the election for President Obama, but Andre Murias, an 18-year-old first-time voter in Miami Dade County, FL, was still in line waiting to cast his ballot. Andre had been in line at South Kendall Community Church for nearly 5 hours by the time he cast his ballot just before midnight, and that is nothing compared to the 7 and 8 hours many other Floridians waited to cast their ballots during the State's condensed early voting period. "This is a mess," one voter said. "It is chaos."

Rashell Hobbs, another first-time voter, waited 5 hours in Chesapeake, VA. "This is just horrible," Rashell said. "There is no reason it should take this long."

Voters across the country had other challenges or problems voting. Voters

in Pueblo, CO, said they checked the box on their touch screen panel to vote for Mitt Romney, but it kept switching their pick to President Obama. "I wonder whether my vote really counted," one Colorado voter said.

Voters in Pennsylvania reported a similar problem, although in that case it was the President for whom they were seemingly unable to vote.

Poll watchers in Davidson County, TN, could only stand by as would-be voters saw the very, very long line of people waiting to cast their ballots and drove away, pressed, I am sure, by commitments of family or work to choose not to spend hours standing in line to exercise that most fundamental of American rights—the right to vote.

In Philadelphia, longtime registered voters who showed up to cast their ballots discovered their names simply weren't on the rolls anymore.

In Ohio, Wisconsin, South Carolina, New York, Montana—more than a dozen States experienced some kind of basic breakdown in the administration of their elections in 2012.

This is the United States. The right to vote is fundamental to who we are. It is basic to our democracy. It is in our DNA. We have to get this right.

That is why I introduced the Fair, Accurate, Secure, and Timely—or FAST—Voting Act of 2012, along with Senators WARNER and WHITEHOUSE. And I am grateful that Congressmen CONNOLLY and LANGEVIN in the House have introduced it and are cosponsors there.

In my view, long lines are simply another form of disenfranchising voters. Running out of ballots is simply another form of voter suppression. Incomplete and inaccurate voter rolls, disregarded voter registrations, misleading phone calls and mailing pieces—things that make it harder for citizens to vote are simply a violation of voters' civil rights.

We can and must do better. As widespread as the problem was in 2012, there are also many States that are getting it right, and these States, in my view, continue to be laboratories of democracy from which we should learn. The FAST Voting Act creates a new competitive Federal grant program roughly modeled on Race to the Top, which encourages States to pursue reforms in a different field, in education. States that demonstrate the most comprehensive and promising reform plans win a greater portion of the grant funding in that model. Instead, the FAST Voting Act would inspire election reform. This bill authorizes a Federal program that would award grants based on how well States improve access to the ballot in at least 9 different ways: through flexible registration opportunities, including same-day registration; through early voting at a minimum of 9 of the 10 calendar days preceding an election; through what is called no-excuse absentee voting; assistance to voters who do not speak English or have disabilities or visual

impairments; effective access to voting for members of our armed services; formal training of election officials, including State and county administrators and volunteers; audited and reduced waiting times at poorest performing polling stations; and, as we learned given that Sandy, Superstorm Sandy, occurred close to the election, contingency plans for voting in the event of a natural or other disaster that compels a delay of an election.

These are the big areas mentioned in this FAST Voting Act, making it easier to register, making it easier to vote early, making it easier to vote absentee, shortening lines, better preparing for catastrophes, making it easier for Americans to exercise their right to vote.

This is a good one, and I am working with a host of civil rights and voter protection groups who work, day in and day out, on strengthening our electoral process. It encourages States and localities to find new and creative and local solutions that other States can learn from.

Mr. President, as you know, in my service prior to coming to this body I was a county executive and long active with NACO, the Nation Association of Counties. Counties have different roles in different States. There are more than 3,000 counties spread across our 50 States but in most States they are responsible in part for administering elections. Many election officials are county-elected officials and many voter boards are parts of county government. One of the things I think is best about this bill, this FAST Voting Act of 2012, is that rather than mandating some specific response it encourages and incentivizes State and local officials to put together plans for how to learn from the lessons of 2012, how to learn from the long lines and the barriers that were put in front of those who came out to vote, and finding the best solutions; rather than imposing or compelling, incentivizing and leading in a way that I think State and local officials will respond to well and will accept and celebrate.

There is strong momentum. Although the election is now more than a month behind us, my hope is that we will continue to focus on the challenges of this last election and fix them before the next. The Pew Conference, today and tomorrow, on voting in America is bringing together some of our Nation's foremost experts and scholars. For that we are grateful to the Pew Charitable Foundation.

The Judiciary Committee on which we serve has a hearing announced this coming week and I applaud Chairman LEAHY and Senator DURBIN for highlighting the need to get to the bottom of what happened in 2012 and championing the need to get reform. Other Members, Senators GILLIBRAND and BOXER, have introduced bills as well and I look forward to working closely with them to harmonize our bills and making sure we have the best approach moving forward.

In addition to serving on the Judiciary Committee, I am chairman of the African Affairs Subcommittee of the Foreign Relations Committee. In that role I advocate for free and fair elections with African leaders every day. The United States is often cited as their role model. We need to act like it and we need to earn it.

What kind of message are we sending to electoral commissions, to heads of State, to members of civil society, and advocates of free, fair, and open elections in the rest of the world when we so visibly and publicly fail to deliver on that promise here in our own country? What kind of message are we sending to Andre Murias, a first-time voter? What kind of message are we sending to Rashell Hobbs? What kind of message are we sending to first-time voters about the value of their right to vote, for which so many fought, worked, struggled, sacrificed, even died in the course of our history? What message do we send to them when we allow modern-day barriers to be put in their place?

Voting is a fundamental civil right, and when States prevent their citizens from exercising that right, whether deliberately through law or through regulations or accidentally through lack of preparation or mere incompetence, it is a violation of voters' civil rights. The Fair, Accurate, Secure and Timely Voting Act is one critical way we can try to fix our elections and make sure what happened across our country in 2012 never happens again.

TRIBUTES TO DEPARTING SENATORS

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, last week I came to the floor and was honored to give tributes to some of our departing colleagues. Tonight I am going to take advantage of this time to pay tribute to two other outstanding Senators, colleagues and friends of mine whom I will miss greatly. They are Senator KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON and Senator SCOTT BROWN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine is recognized.

KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, in her marvelous book entitled "American Heroines: The Spirited Women Who Shaped Our Country," Senator KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON wrote the following: "No history can be written appropriately without acknowledging the part women have played in building the greatness of our country."

As my valued colleague and good friend begins a new chapter in her life, I hope she finds the time to add a new chapter to her own book, one that will be fascinating, inspiring—and autobiographical.

Like the women KAY celebrates as an author, from Amelia Earhart to Sally Ride, from Clara Barton to Condoleezza Rice, KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON is a pioneer, a breaker of barriers. In the special election in 1993, the people of