

may have saved the world from catastrophe time and again. He reached out to a young Senator from Illinois by the name of Barack Obama and took him on a congressional delegation tour to look into this issue. I think at the end of the day their friendship was solid, and President Obama notes it was one of the more important overseas visits he made as a Member of the Senate.

I know DICK LUGAR as well from the many times we came together with our wives at the Aspen Institute. It is truly unfortunate that there aren't more Senators participating in the Aspen Institute. It is a meeting, usually overseas, of members of the Senate and their spouses with experts to discuss some of the most important problems facing us in this world. No lobbyists are allowed to attend; it is truly 2 or 3 days of work. But it is also a time in the evening to sit together and come to know a family. Loretta and I have come to know Char and DICK LUGAR as exceptional people. Char and I would sit and talk about books—which she loves to read and I do too—and DICK and I would talk about the topic of the day, and we created a bond of friendship in those experiences.

He has done so much work in the Senate, as Senator MCCONNELL noted, starting as the mayor of Indianapolis and working his way up to the Senate. He became a powerful force in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and I was honored to serve on that committee over the last several years and watch his work unfold and evolve.

DICK LUGAR is going on to great things, I am sure. This is not the end of his service to our country. I wish him and Char the very best, whatever their next undertaking may be.

As you receive praise from the Senator from Kentucky to the south of Indiana, accept some from the Senator from west of Indiana in the State of Illinois. I am honored to count DICK LUGAR as a friend, and I am sure going to miss you. You have been an extraordinary ally and colleague on so many important issues.

DANIEL AKAKA

Mr. President, I also add my comments in chorus to what the majority leader said about Senator DAN AKAKA of Hawaii.

I came to know him—and I have spoken about this on the floor—and Millie who are the perfect Senate family. They have devoted a major part of their lives to serving Hawaii and serving in the national interest.

The legacy Senator AKAKA leaves behind is substantial when it comes to legislation, particularly in helping veterans and agricultural issues. But, more important, what DAN AKAKA leaves behind is the feeling of kinship and camaraderie which he has with so many Members of the Senate. He is a stalwart at the Senate Prayer Breakfast, leading the singing every Wednesday morning, and it is heartfelt and very genuine.

As Senator REID mentioned earlier, his family background of Hawaii—

which he shared with us one afternoon at a lunch—is a tradition of giving and hospitality which we find built in to DANNY AKAKA. We are going to miss him.

JIM WEBB

To the Presiding Officer—I said a few words on the floor before—we thank you for your service. You did an extraordinary job here. There aren't many one-termers who make a mark in the Senate and on the Nation. You did it.

I can remember—I thought it was a little bold of you, maybe even more—when you came in and said: I want to rewrite the GI bill, and you did it and it was exceptional. You have helped thousands of men and women who have served in our military come back to America and be welcomed and be productive parts of our future.

In so many ways, I wish to thank Senator JIM WEBB, our Presiding Officer, for being an important and viable part of the Senate. I know you will continue to serve our Nation in many different capacities in the future, and I am sure they will be equally exceptional.

THE FISCAL CLIFF

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I have to answer some of the comments made earlier by the Republican leader as he talked about the state of negotiations between the President and Congress as we face the fiscal cliff. He said at one point that the President is calling for raising taxes \$1.6 trillion. That is true. But I would call to his attention that the Simpson-Bowles Commission suggested that 40 percent of the \$4 trillion in deficit reduction comes from revenue and taxes. What the President is suggesting is entirely consistent with that bipartisan group's call for more revenue and taxes as part of our deficit reduction.

The President has made it clear, though, that he wants to protect and insulate middle-income families from any income tax increases, and I agree with him. We should not raise the income taxes on those making less than \$250,000 a year. I voted that way in July. We sent the bill to the House. It sits there. It languishes in the House because the Speaker will not call it. He has his chance this week or next to call that bill on the floor of the House of Representatives to avoid any tax increase on middle-income families. That is an important bill for us to get done before we leave at the end of this particular session of Congress.

Let me say that \$1.6 trillion in taxes over 10 years is not an unreasonable amount. The tax rate the President is asking for is the rate that was in place during the expansive period in our economy under President Bill Clinton. To argue that the President has gone too far in asking for tax and revenue is to ignore the obvious. It is the same percentage asked for by Simpson-Bowles, if not less, and it is a tax rate

that, frankly, ruled in this country at a period of time when we had more jobs and businesses created than ever in recent history.

A second argument that was made by the Republican leader is that there is a proposal from the President to raise the debt ceiling at his whim. Those are his words. I beg to differ. What the President has proposed is exactly the McConnell procedure. Senator MCCONNELL of Kentucky suggested to us that we have a process for extending the debt ceiling that allows Members of Congress to vote to approve or disapprove and ultimately for the President to decide whether to sign into law—their resolution of disapproval, for example. That, of course, could lead to a veto and another opportunity for Congress to vote again.

This was a process Senator MCCONNELL suggested. It was a way out of a bind when the House Republicans and others threatened to shut down the economy over the debt ceiling extension, which is, in fact, the mortgage of the United States of America. It would have otherwise led to the first major default on America's debt in our history, with calamitous results when it came to the impact on our economy.

For the Republican leader to come to the floor and criticize the very same procedure he suggested and voted for I think is hard to understand and explain. Last week he came to the floor and suggested that we enshrine it in law. He offered the bill on the floor. Senator REID came and said: We accept your invitation, and we will take a rollcall vote on that, at which point Senator MCCONNELL filibustered his own bill that he had introduced, I recall, earlier in the day. I think he made history in the Senate, filibustering his own bill when we had a chance to vote and pass it.

I would say this notion that the President is looking for an extraordinary power when it comes to the debt ceiling is not quite accurate. I say to the Senator from Kentucky, if we accept your approach to it, it will give the Senate and House a voice, but we will not risk default.

Third, the Senator from Kentucky was lamenting the size of government growth. When we took a look at the last time we balanced the budget and had a surplus in Washington, it was under President William Jefferson Clinton, a little over 12 years ago. What has happened to spending since President Clinton's balanced budget? It has gone up substantially. Where has it gone up? In domestic discretionary accounts, which are often the target of speeches like Senator MCCONNELL's today? No. That has basically been flatlined when you take inflation into consideration. The dramatic growth in government spending since we were last in balance has been in two areas. One of those was in military spending. I might add that the reason it has grown dramatically is we have been at war in Afghanistan and Iraq. The

President has extricated us from Iraq, and we are in the process of leaving Afghanistan.

If you want to know why government spending has gone up so fast, there has been a 64-percent increase in military spending since the budget was last in balance. There was no increase in domestic discretionary spending when you take inflation into account but 64 percent in military spending. That is why spending has gone up. Yet, when they suggest we will cut spending in the sequester, people say: You cannot touch it; it has to continue to grow. I question that. I think we can be safe as a nation and really address the wasteful spending taking place in the Pentagon as well as every other government agency.

Where else is there a growth in government spending? The same analysis by Senator INOUE says that since the budget was in balance, the expenditures in entitlement spending have gone up 30 percent—30 percent. It is a substantial pool of money. Why? Because yesterday 10,000 Americans reached the age of 65, today another 10,000, tomorrow another 10,000 and every day for the next 18 years as the boomers arrive. To lament the growth in entitlements is to ignore the obvious: we have more people calling on Social Security and Medicare for help. People have paid into these systems for a lifetime and now—I think quite rightfully—expect to be covered by the same programs they have supported for so many years in their working lives.

Is the Senator from Kentucky suggesting that we need to cut back when it comes to eligibility in Social Security and Medicare? That would sure restrain the growth, but it would be fundamentally unfair and unwise to tell people who paid in a lifetime to Social Security and Medicare that now you do not get your benefits.

Let's be honest about the growth in government spending. When you have wars that you do not pay for, when you have entitlement programs created, such as the Medicare prescription Part D, unpaid for, when you have a growth in entitlements just by the demographic growth in America, that accounts for a lot of the increase in spending.

There is one other key element. A large measure of the increase in Federal spending has been increased health care costs, and we estimate that in the next 10 to 20 years, 70 percent of Federal budget outlays will grow because of increased health care costs. We addressed this. We went after the growth in health care costs with the President's ObamaCare—the health care reform bill—in an attempt to contain it and had not one single Republican who would join us in that effort. Not one. We ended up passing it exclusively as a Democratic bill. That is a shame because I think Democrats and Republicans should share the same goal of trying to reduce the increased cost of health care spending.

When it comes to the President's offer, we need a bold approach again. We need to contain the spending costs as we already have, already cutting \$1 trillion in spending to date. We need to have revenue sources, which the President has asked for, and we need to look at entitlement programs—I want to be very specific—not entitlement cuts per se but entitlement reform. Untouched, Medicare runs out of money in 12 years. That is a challenge to each and every one of us today—not 12 years from now but today. What will we do in the next year, looking at entitlement programs such as Medicare, to make sure they have a life well beyond 12 years? I think that is a responsibility we should face squarely, and it should be part of this deficit negotiation. I am not for a quick fix that is introduced in the next couple of days or hours; rather, I would like to see a thoughtful repair and reform of Medicare and other entitlement programs so they will continue to be in service in the future.

GREATER EXPORTS TO AFRICA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I have visited Africa many times. When I have, I have left with an amazing impression of this great continent and all that it contains. It really does lure one and draw you back to the different places in Africa that offer such a rich history but also offer great opportunity.

What I find in Africa today is that China has an increasing presence on that continent. China has a plan when it comes to the future of Africa. America does not. That is why I am going to offer as an amendment to the TAG bill which is currently pending before the Senate the American Jobs Through Greater Exports to Africa Act. My partners on the bill are Senators CHRIS COONS, BEN CARDIN, JOHN BOOZMAN, and MARY LANDRIEU, as well as support in the House from Representative CHRIS SMITH.

At the heart of this bill is the creation of jobs in America. Exporting more goods to Africa will help create jobs here. Every \$1 billion in exports supports over 5,000 jobs. I believe we can increase exports from the United States to Africa by 200 percent in real dollars over the next 10 years, and we cannot wait any longer.

If there are some who say that Africa is so backward and so far behind, what is it in the United States they can afford to buy if they even wanted to, that is old thinking. Let me give you some new reality. In the past 10 years, 6 of the world's fastest growing economies are in Sub-Saharan Africa, and in the next 5 years Sub-Saharan Africa will boast seven of the top fastest growing economies in the world. The number of Africans with access to the Internet has increased over the last 10 years fourfold to 27 percent. From 1998 to today, the number of mobile phones on the continent have grown from 4 million to 500 million, and 78 percent of

Africa's rural population has access to clean water. These are signs of a growing middle class.

China sees it. We have to see it. China is insinuating itself into the economy of major Africa nations. They are offering concessional loans, and they are offering their contractors, their engineers, and their investment in Africa. We are not. We are going to rue the day. Africa is a great opportunity for us, and this bill addresses it.

I sincerely hope my colleagues in the Senate will consider supporting this greater exports to Africa trade bill. This is something we can do to increase jobs in America, increase trade with Africa, and really build those countries that share our values. The difference between the United States, China, and other countries? We come to the marketplace with values, and we have to make certain those values are protected and encouraged. We can only do that if we are honest traders and we are actively engaged in expanding the markets for our goods and services.

Over the years and during my travels, I have heard from African leaders and American businesses the same story—the U.S. has fallen woefully behind other countries in its commercial engagement with Africa. And our government does not have a coordinated strategy to help match the aggressive efforts of other nations trying to invest in Africa. In endorsing this bill, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce has written that, "Congress has an opportunity to reverse this decline."

But why would U.S. businesses and groups representing them, groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Corporate Council on Africa, think this effort is so important? As I have said, in the past 10 years, 6 of the world's fastest growing economies are in Sub-Saharan Africa, and in the next 5 years Sub-Saharan Africa will boast 7 of the top 10 fastest economies.

From 2000 to 2009, the number of Africans with access to the internet has increased four-fold to 27 percent.

From 1998 to today, the number of mobile phones on the continent has grown from 4 million to more than 500 million, and 78 percent of Africa's rural population has access to clean water.

These are signs of a growing middle class and what the World Bank has called "the brink of an economic take-off" for Africa. U.S. businesses must be a part of that take-off, and our government must provide a cohesive system of support and a coherent national strategy to enable it. That is what this bill does, and it does so at almost no cost. It would develop a comprehensive strategy to coordinate the work of several U.S. government agencies that help U.S. businesses export American products and services to Africa.

The bill creates a Special Africa Export Strategy Coordinator to ensure that these government agencies are working together efficiently, and in a way that businesses of all sizes can navigate easily. It is smart, low cost,