

freedom-loving men and women calling for an end to discrimination violence against African Americans.

Today, JOHN LEWIS is a distinguished member of the U.S. House of Representatives, but back then when he was a young civil rights leader, he was determined to fight injustice and force the United States to live up to its founding principle that all people are created equal.

I had the good fortune to go—not this year but a year or two ago—down to Selma and participate in this reenactment. JOHN LEWIS was there, as I saw on TV a few days ago. It was a cold day when I went there, and you saw them all bundled a few days ago. And on the day of the march, you see the TV pictures of JOHN LEWIS with a long coat, and he had a backpack. I asked him what was in the backpack. He said, I thought I would be arrested and I would be put in jail. I had in that backpack an apple and a book I was reading.

After being viciously beaten, JOHN LEWIS doesn't know what happened to his apple, his book, or his backpack. But what a legend he has become. He wasn't arrested that day. Instead, JOHN and the peaceful protesters by his side were met a few blocks into their march by State troopers with dogs, fire hoses, and clubs, and they used every one of them against these marchers. Many of the marchers, including JOHN LEWIS, were viciously beaten.

The terrible violence of that day, known as Bloody Sunday, was broadcast across the country. For the first time the bloody reality of the struggle for equal rights was beamed into America's living rooms. Bloody Sunday marked the turning point in the civil rights movement as Americans cried out against the injustice and bloodshed they saw on the television screens.

Later that month protesters finally completed that march from Selma to Montgomery, and more than 25,000 patriots converged on the Alabama State Capitol Building. From the steps of the Alabama capitol, Dr. Martin Luther King spoke of the power of peaceful resistance. This is what he said:

Selma, Alabama, became a shining moment in the conscience of man. If the worst in American life lurked in its dark street, the best of American instincts arose passionately from across the nation to overcome it.

Six months later President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and that is where Senator Thurmond, whom I had the good fortune of serving with here, took to the floor and gave that speech for 24 hours.

I may disagree with Strom Thurmond, but he had a right to talk. RAND PAUL had a right to talk.

The Supreme Court last week considered striking sections of the law barring areas with a history of discrimination from changing voting practices without Federal approval. That is what the Voting Rights Act was all about. Critics say those protections are no longer necessary. But anyone who

waited hours to cast a ballot in 2012 knows that is not true. A 102-year-old woman waited 8 hours to vote. And anyone who has watched the State legislature pass laws designed to intimidate eligible voters and keep the poor, minorities, and the elderly from the polls knows the fight for freedom is not over.

America has made great strides to eradicate racism, thanks to legends such as JOHN LEWIS. But, together, we must guard that progress with vigilance, keeping in mind the sacrifices made by so many 48 years ago today.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

BRENNAN NOMINATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday the junior the Senator from Kentucky took to the Senate floor to exercise his rights as an individual Senator in pursuit of an answer from the Attorney General concerning the rights of U.S. citizens.

The filibuster was extended, heartfelt, and important, and I wish to say a few words in reaction to that effort and, as well, on the nomination of John Brennan to be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The question he raised was entirely appropriate and should have already been answered by the Obama administration.

First, I wish to state for the RECORD and to correct any misimpression that yesterday's long debate was a criticism of the Senate's oversight of our Nation's intelligence activities. In fact, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence is responsible for conducting vigorous oversight of our Nation's intelligence activities, and I want to make clear that they were not the subject of last night's debate. The members of that committee conduct that oversight in a professional, responsible manner, and selflessly serve the rest of the Senate in that capacity.

Let me assure the Senate, the activities of the intelligence community are closely monitored and overseen by the Intelligence Committee, to include all counterterrorism activities.

Most recently, the committee has conducted a serious and much-needed inquiry into the terrorist attack on the temporary mission facility in Benghazi, Libya, and has conducted a thorough review of John Brennan's nomination to be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Thanks to the leadership of Chairman FEINSTEIN and Vice Chairman CHAMBLISS, the committee has made significant progress in reviewing Mr. Brennan's record, the intelligence related to the terrorist threat in Libya, and in reviewing the administration's legal opinions concerning some overseas activities.

Second, in reviewing Mr. Brennan's nomination, Senator PAUL has asked a series of questions of the executive branch. Senator PAUL has a right to ask questions of the administration, and the administration has a responsibility to answer in keeping with the rules established for oversight of intelligence activities and for protecting sensitive information.

The specific question, however, is not an intelligence-related question but a straightforward legal question: Does the President have the authority to order the use of lethal force against a U.S. citizen who is not a combatant on U.S. soil without due process of law?

To his credit, John Brennan directly answered the question motivating Senator PAUL's filibuster: The Central Intelligence Agency does not conduct lethal operations inside the United States, nor does it have the authority to do so. What is befuddling is why the Attorney General has not directly and clearly answered the question.

The U.S. military no more has the right to kill a U.S. citizen on U.S. soil who is not a combatant with an armed unmanned aerial vehicle than it does with an M-16. The technology is beside the point. It simply doesn't have that right, and the administration should simply answer the question. There is no reason we cannot get this question answered today. And we should get the question answered today. Frankly, it should have been answered a long time ago.

Last, during Senator PAUL's filibuster, I noted that I cannot support John Brennan's confirmation. During January of 2009, the President issued a series of Executive orders which, in my judgment, weakened the ability of our intelligence community to find, capture, detain, and interrogate terrorists. As President Obama's senior adviser on counterterrorism, Mr. Brennan has been a fierce defender of the administration's approach to counterterrorism as articulated by the Executive orders I just referred to. He has been a loyal, dogged defender of the administration's policies, policies with which I seriously disagree. My greatest concern is that the Director of Central Intelligence must be entirely independent of partisan politics in developing objective analysis and advice that he gives to the President. After 4 years of working within the White House, confronting difficult policy matters on a daily basis, and having attempted to defend the administration's policies—sometimes publicly, sometimes to the media, and occasionally to the Senate—I question whether Mr. Brennan can detach himself from those experiences.

For that reason I will oppose his nomination.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF JOHN OWEN BRENNAN TO BE DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of John Owen Brennan, of Virginia, to be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

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

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak as in morning business for up to 12 minutes.

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

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I come to the floor to speak about spending and its impact on economic growth. I think it is important Washington closely considers the true impact Federal spending and our soaring national debt are having on economic growth.

Over the past few weeks, the White House and the President have been out campaigning across the country and making statements aimed at causing fear and anxiety about the sequester. The White House has painted the sequester—which, keep in mind, amounts to just 2.4 percent of all Federal spending—as something which would lead to an economic disaster in this country.

The White House attempts to cause fear and anxiety have fallen flat. What is more, many of the claims which were made were simply false. In fact, the critics agree.

Bill Keller wrote in the New York Times: “The White House spent last week in full campaign hysteria.”

The Washington Post issued four Pinocchios with regard to false claims made by Education Secretary Arne Duncan about the sequester’s impact on teachers’ jobs.

The National Journal states: “The White House’s strategy to exaggerate the immediate impact of the cuts has backfired.”

In Politico: “For all the hype, spin and blame exchanged over the across-the-board cuts, the reality is they don’t mean the sudden economic collapse of America.”

It is important to see the sequester in its overall context. All the hype associated with this could be analogous, I suppose, to all the hype we had yester-

day about the weather. Everybody expected we were going to have the blizzard of 2013, and it never materialized. All of the predictions with regard to doom and gloom relating to sequester have also not amounted to very much.

The American people have picked up on that. I think most of them agree, if you look at public opinion polls, that Washington does need to tighten its belt. Washington does need to reduce its spending. Washington needs to lessen the appetite it has to take more of the American taxpayers’ money and spend it on what most taxpayers view to be not really necessary.

When you talk about a 2.4-percent reduction in overall Federal spending, most Americans, when they evaluate their own financial situations, come to the conclusion most of them probably could absorb, if they had to, a 2.4-percent reduction in their own spending. They would look at their budgets in very realistic ways. They would scrutinize and examine where they could find spending which is low priority, things they could live without. What we have seen here in Washington from the administration is various heads of agencies and departments going out and trying to identify the biggest, most high-profile thing for dramatic effect in an attempt to scare and frighten the American people.

The American people recognize, and hopefully the administration has come to the conclusion as well, a 2.4-percent reduction in overall Federal spending is something we need to absorb here in Washington, DC, and demonstrate to the American people we are serious about getting Washington’s fiscal house in order.

I have long maintained the sequester is not the best way to rein in Federal spending. There is a better way to do so. The reductions called for in the sequester disproportionately impact certain areas of the budget. We all know about the impact on the national security budget, which represents only 20 percent of Federal spending but gets 50 percent of the cuts in the sequester.

I would have preferred a different approach. Given the refusal of President Obama and Senate Democrats to come to the table and find alternative savings, the sequester has gone into effect. The President and most Senate Democrats wanted to see an increase in taxes, something many of us believe would be very harmful to the economy. If you look at what the President has already received in terms of tax increases since he has been in office, it amounts to about \$1.7 trillion.

If you look at the last 4 years and all the promises which were made about additional spending, stimulus spending, \$1 trillion in additional stimulus spending back when the President first took office, how that would impact the economy, we were told it would take unemployment down below 6 percent. We all know what has happened. We continue to experience sluggish, slow, anemic growth with chronic high unemploy-

ment, and we continue to pile massive amounts of debt on the backs of our children and grandchildren.

While the President has been seeking to cause alarm and cast blame with regard to the sequester, one must question the economic arguments he is making. The President and his allies in Congress claim he inherited a bad economy and increased spending is necessary to stimulate economic growth. President Obama’s agenda, since he has been in office, has been to spend more, tax more, and regulate more.

As I mentioned earlier, over \$1.7 trillion in new taxes has been imposed to be signed into law since he took office. The most recent of that, the fiscal cliff, was \$620 billion on January 1. If you add up the tax increases in ObamaCare, there is over \$1 trillion there. If you look at the \$518 billion in new regulations which have been approved since the President took office, you may see we put an enormous amount of cost, burden, new requirements, mandates, and harm to the economy and the small businesses which create jobs: \$1.7 trillion in new taxes, the \$518 billion in new regulations.

What has been the impact of those policies? It is pretty clear average economic growth under this President has averaged eight-tenths of 1 percent, .8 percent of the overall share of the economy, GDP. This is less than 1 percent economic growth, on average, in the 4 years this President has been in office.

To put it in perspective, if you look at past Presidents when we have had economic downturns and recessions, President Reagan inherited a bad economy too. When he came to office, we were faced with a series of real economic circumstances: high inflation, high interest rates, and weak growth.

President Reagan put in place policies which were progrowth. He enacted progrowth tax reform, fewer regulations. The economy grew nearly three times as fast as it has under President Obama’s watch.

The point, very simply, is if you put the right policies in place, if you make it less difficult and less expensive for our small businesses and our job creators to create more jobs, there are more jobs and economic growth. If you make it more difficult, more expensive, and harder for our small businesses and our job creators to create jobs, there are fewer jobs, less economic growth, and lower take-home pay for American families and workers.

If the Obama recovery was as strong as Reagan’s, our economy would be \$1.5 trillion larger today, meaning more jobs and more opportunity for Americans. This is assuming if you were getting a comparable level of growth in the economy. The fact is President Obama’s spending, tax, and regulatory policies are hamstringing economic recovery, jobs, and opportunity.

Yesterday the Federal Reserve released the latest edition of its so-called beige book or more formally known as