

more than \$1 trillion they got in taxes from ObamaCare as well. So now it is time for the balance they promised. Washington does not need to tax more; it needs to finally figure out how to spend less.

I said that these things were the least Senate Democrats owed the American people, given their lack of responsibility in not producing a budget for the last 4 years. I am sorry to report that the plan they put forward yesterday will do none of these things. Instead of getting Washington spending under control, their proposed budget doubles down on the same wasteful stimulus spending we already know does not work. We have tried that. In fact, at a time when Americans believe that about half of every dollar they send to Washington is wasted, the Democratic budget would increase spending by nearly 62 percent. Their budget will do more to harm the economy than to help it, and it will let Medicare and Social Security drift ever closer to bankruptcy.

Then there is the Democrats' \$1.5 trillion tax hike—that is trillion with a “t.” Let me repeat that. Any Senator who votes for that budget is voting for a \$1.5 trillion tax hike—the largest tax hike in America's history. So the Senate Democratic budget is more than just disappointing, it is extreme. It is really one of the most extreme, most leftwing budgets of the modern era.

I think it says something about today's Washington Democrats. There was a time when the Democratic Party cared about fiscal responsibility, when Democrats understood the need to be concerned about the impact their policies would have on hard-working taxpayers, a time when they would have rejected this budget as a joke. But those voices of reason have been mostly chased out of today's DC Democrats. The few who remain have been sidelined and silenced throughout the budget process. Even the chairman of the Finance Committee has been pushed aside so his fellow Democrats can quickly ram through their massive tax hike.

It will be no surprise to hear that my conference opposes a leftwing manifesto masquerading as a responsible budget, and when Americans get a chance to digest their budget and the one House Republicans put forward earlier this week, they will see some very clear differences between a budget that balances and one that enshrines waste and cronyism; between a budget that helps bring the economy back to health and one that kills jobs; between a budget that measures compassion in how many people it helps and one that counts compassion in how many hard-earned tax dollars are sent to Washington for politicians to waste; between a budget that strengthens Medicare and one that would put Medicare even further out of reach for future generations. In short, they will see a bold, reformist Republican budget centered on their needs and an extreme

Democratic budget centered on the needs of Washington bureaucrats and politicians.

I hope Senate Democrats think again before they choose to push such an extreme budget forward because I think they will find that Americans agree with Republicans on the most important point: We need to grow the economy, not the Government.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN MCCAIN

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, more than four decades ago, millions of people watched in awe as Neil Armstrong took his first steps on the Moon. I remember that day still, and I am sure many of you do. It remains one of our country's proudest moments. But not every American was able to share in the excitement. As the senior Senator from Arizona put it, when the momentous event occurred, I had no idea it was happening. I and several hundred comrades were otherwise engaged. That is because 2 years earlier, on his 23rd bombing run over Vietnam, a missile hit Lieutenant Commander MCCAIN's plane. He ejected, his body spiraling through the air until it hit water thousands of feet below—a lake right in the center of Hanoi.

An angry mob set upon him. They ripped off his clothes; they hit, kicked, and spat upon him. They bayoneted his ankle and his groin. The Senator was left with two broken arms and a broken leg, and he passed sort of in and out of consciousness. But he has never forgotten what came next, when Vietnamese forces gathered him up and took him to the so-called Hanoi Hilton. As the massive steel doors locked shut behind him, Senator MCCAIN said he felt “a deeper dread than [he has] ever felt since.”

He would remain an enemy captive for the next 5½ years, cut off from family and friends, from even the simplest joys of life, things you and I take for granted: the aromas of Thanksgiving, the far-away thrill of cheering a hometown team on to victory, the sounds that let us know the world around us is alive with action, with movement, with hope. But JOHN MCCAIN never lost hope even when he was locked in solitary confinement and even when he was tortured. His captors poorly cast his broken arms on purpose. They broke an arm again and hung the young captive by his lifeless limbs so they could torture him some more.

Eventually, Vietnamese officials discovered he was the son of a high-ranking Navy officer and offered him a release. He turned their offers down. It was partly because he knew an early release would be used cynically by the Communist propaganda machine but, more importantly, because he refused to skip the line ahead of his fellow POWs.

It is one thing to talk about attributes such as courage and bravery in the abstract, it is quite another to demonstrate those qualities in the

most trying of circumstances. It reminds me of an old saying: “The superior man is modest in his speech but exceeds in his actions.” That kind of man—well, that is just who JOHN MCCAIN is.

His campaign motto in 2008 was “Country First.” For some politicians that might have been just a slogan, but for my colleague from Arizona I know it was authentically and truly him. Senator MCCAIN still wears the scars of his long detention. He cannot raise his arms above shoulder level. One of his legs still has not fully healed. I can only imagine the weight of the memories he still must carry with him. Yet he endures—a man who has always seen his life in service, transformed from a captive of the enemy into a servant of the people.

For more than 30 years he has represented Arizona with great distinction, in both the House and Senate. He is a valued member of the Senate Republican Conference, especially when it comes to issues he cares about most passionately—defense being at the top of the list. As someone who experienced the horrors of war in the truest sense, he understands what it means to send young Americans into harm's way, and he never takes those decisions lightly.

Because he knows what it means to be in chains, he also understands what it means to be free. He was able to leave his prison behind, but for millions around the world there is no escape from suffering and despair. That is why Senator MCCAIN has always been so outspoken about his view of the responsibility we, as a free people, have to help others secure their own liberty, whether in Pyongyang, Libya, Damascus, or—a cause close to my own heart as well—Burma.

He has been absolutely unafraid to take unpopular and sometimes solitary stands on issues when he believes in the cause. He never wavered in his support for the surge in Iraq, for instance, even when others said it would take a “willing suspension of disbelief” for the policy to succeed, but it did. That is why when he speaks, others listen—even when they may not agree with him.

Senator MCCAIN provides a unique and much needed perspective in the Senate, and we are fortunate to have him as our colleague. He certainly knows I am grateful for his contributions. Let's take a moment today to mark the 40th anniversary of Senator MCCAIN's release from captivity and to thank him for his sacrifice on behalf of all of us for enduring the unendurable, for keeping faith with his fellow POWs, and for believing in our country when others had given up hope. We honor him for his service, service that began as a plebe so many years ago, and service that continues today as a Member of the Senate.

We thank you, Senator MCCAIN.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I am grateful for the kind words and sentiment expressed by my leader Senator MCCONNELL, and I appreciate very much his kind remarks. On this anniversary day, I still think the greatest honor of my life was the privilege of serving in the company of heroes who inspired all of us to things that otherwise we may not have been capable of. It has been a great honor for me to serve with Senator MCCONNELL as my leader in the Senate. On this particular day, I appreciate his very kind sentiments.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, what a wonderful speech. I am proud to serve with Senator MCCAIN. America has so few heroes. America needs all the heroes we can get, and people whom we can identify with—not comic book figures wearing weird costumes. There are men and women who put themselves in harm's way and do daring and dashing things for the good of other people, and it is just an honor. We have our dustups, but that is part of the fun.

I just want to salute Senator MCCAIN in the warmest and most sincere way. God bless Senator MCCAIN, and we wish him good health—and even a good voice and occasionally a good amendment. Again, it is an honor.

If I might speak to the Republican leader, I am so glad Senator MCCONNELL did this today because I think we need to take a pause to understand why we are in it together, why we should respect each other, work with each other, and take a moment or two to recall a great story about a great hero.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I thank the Senator from Maryland. I can assure her that if she and I had served together in that place faraway, she would have been a very tough and courageous resister.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I thank the Senator.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND FULL-YEAR CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2013

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 933.

The clerk will report the bill.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 933) to make appropriations for the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and other departments and agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2013, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Reid (for Mikulski-Shelby) modified amendment No. 26, in the nature of a substitute.

Harkin-Cardin amendment No. 53 (to amendment No. 26), of a perfecting nature.

Inhofe amendment No. 29 (to amendment No. 26), to prohibit the expenditure of Federal funds to enforce the spill prevention, control, and countermeasure rule of the Environmental Protection Agency against farmers.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maryland is recognized.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I have a unanimous consent request that I understand has been cleared on both sides of the aisle.

I ask unanimous consent that it now be in order for Senator COBURN to call up his amendment numbered 66; that there be 60 minutes equally divided in the usual form for debate on the Harkin and Coburn amendments to run concurrently; and that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote in relation to the Harkin and Coburn amendments in the order offered; that there be no amendments in order to either amendment prior to the votes; and both amendments to be subject to a 60-affirmative-vote threshold.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I note that the Senator from Oklahoma is on the floor.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Oklahoma.

AMENDMENT NO. 66 TO AMENDMENT NO. 26

Mr. COBURN. Madam President, I ask that the pending amendment be set aside and amendment No. 66 be called up.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Oklahoma [Mr. COBURN], for himself and Mr. MCCAIN, proposes an amendment numbered 66.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To temporarily freeze the hiring of nonessential Federal employees)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . FREEZE ON HIRING OF NONESSENTIAL FEDERAL EMPLOYEES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subsection (b), none of the funds made available under division A, B, C, D, E, or F of this Act may be used by any Executive agency (as defined under section 105 of title 5, United States Code, except that such term shall not include the Government Accountability Office) to hire any new employee.

(b) EXCEPTION.—Subsection (a) shall not apply to the hiring of an excepted employee or an employee performing emergency work, as such terms are defined by the Office of Personnel Management.

Mr. COBURN. Madam President, this is a fairly straightforward amendment. It actually follows the guidelines of the recommendations of the Office of Management and Budget. The administra-

tion claims that during this sequestration period we will have to furlough essential workers, which will negatively impact the daily lives of the American people.

Despite dire warnings to cut TSA agents—by the way, Director Pistole thinks they will be just fine, which is totally opposite of what the rest of the administration has said. Air traffic controllers, food inspectors, and thousands of new Federal jobs have been posted since the sequester went into effect.

Let me spend a minute on this issue. Since the sequester has been in effect, the Department of Treasury is looking to hire a leadership development specialist with a salary of \$182,000. The FDA advertised for a social media management service to streamline management of multiple social media platforms. There are 23 openings on the Federal jobs list for recreation, which includes: recreation aide, recreation specialist, and recreation assistant. The Air Force is looking to hire several full-time painters. There is a search to pay \$165,000 for a director of history and museum policies and programs.

The list continues: The Department of Treasury is currently advertising for an outreach manager. The Department of Labor is looking for a staff assistant at \$81,000 a year to answer the phone. There is a search for a policy coordinator for the Department of Health and Human Services to attend and facilitate meetings at \$81,000 a year. There is an opening for a director for the Air Force history and museums policies and programs at \$165,000 a year. There is another opening for an analyst for the Legislative Affairs Office at the Marine Corps for \$90,000 a year. The Department of Agriculture is looking for a director of the government employee services at a range of \$179,000 a year.

There is an opening for counsel for the Morris K. Udall Scholarship Foundation at \$155,000 a year, an opening for an executive assistant at the Department of Agriculture Forest Service to prepare itineraries for travel plans, an opening for an executive staff officer for the Air Force to represent the director of staff at meetings to write draft reports and memos at \$93,000.

These are all nonpriority hirings at a time when we are in sequester. What this amendment would do is simply implement OMB's guidance and freeze hiring for nonessential Federal positions during sequestration but still allow hiring of employees defined by the Office of Personnel Management as exempted or emergency personnel.

If this amendment does not freeze hiring of exempted or emergency employees as defined by OPM—and we all know what that means—there is also an exemption in here that gives agencies the flexibility to know which positions are critical to performing duties and allows their progression.

Right now the agencies are not following OMB's guidance. We hear about possible furloughs, but a good portion