

long-term benefit from sound policies—which, interestingly enough, translate into good politics. Strengthening the economy and getting our country on a track to brighter and more prosperous times should be our priority.

We have proven in Indiana that good policy, no matter how politically difficult it might seem at the time to achieve, does translate into good politics. But much more important than the politics, good policy can translate into strengthening our economy, improving the lives of Americans, and providing opportunity for future generations.

It is time we learn that lesson in Washington that our State of Indiana and many States across the country, as well as other communities, are learning. It is time we exhibit the political courage to stand and do what I think just about everyone in this body understands; that is, to get a hold of runaway spending and borrowing that is putting us in a very deep fiscal hole and will have significant, dire consequences not only on future generations but even our current generation.

The time is now. As I said from this spot yesterday, 2013 is the decisive year. In 2014, we will be back into an election year, and that tired old belief that we cannot make these kinds of changes with the election looming will surface again. If we don't act now, more people will say that we need to wait until after the next election. It will push us into 2015. Many who have looked at our situation fiscally and analyzed it from a nonpartisan, non-ideological basis have said 2015 is too late.

This is the time when we need to summon our courage, summon our political will, and do what is right for the American people. We cannot continue to bump along at less than 2 percent growth. We cannot continue to keep more than 8 percent or nearly 8 percent of our people unemployed; and, obviously, that number is much higher when we count those who are no longer looking for work who have given up. We cannot continue to keep America on the edge of uncertainty in terms of what our fiscal future will look like.

Let us summon that courage to go forward. Let us use examples from those States, the support of those Governors and the support they have received from people across those States. Let us summon the courage to do what we need to do.

I want to continue talking about how we need to address this with a “go big, go bold” type of approach. Everyone says and concludes that if we can put that package together to address our long-term ills over a period of time and bring us back to balance and stability, we will see a revival of the economy of this country and we will see great hope for the American people going forward.

Madam President, with that, I yield the floor and 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.

Mr. ROBERTS. Madam 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.

Mr. ROBERTS. I ask the Acting President pro tempore if we are in morning business, and I assume we are.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct.

Mr. ROBERTS. Thank you, Madam President.

(The remarks of Mr. ROBERTS pertaining to the submission of S. Res. 8 are printed in today's RECORD under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

Mr. ROBERTS. I yield back the remainder of my time, and 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.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam 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.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, President Obama may have been vague on details in his inaugural speech on Monday, but I will give him this, he couldn't have been clearer about the tone and the direction he has in mind for the second term. Gone is the postpartisan rhetoric that propelled him onto the national stage and into the White House. In its place is an unabashedly leftwing appeal for more bureaucratic control and centralized power here in Washington.

On Monday, we saw a President and a party that appeared to have shifted into reverse and jammed on the gas. For Democrats in the Obama age, the era of big government being over is officially over. And anybody who disagrees with their approach isn't just wrong, they are not just standing in the way of progress, they are malevolent, they are the bad guys, they are the ones who want to take food away from children, they want the old and the infirm to suffer, they want to choose between caring for the people who built this country, as the President put it on Monday, and investing in those who will build our future.

I don't know if the President buys all this stuff; I don't know if he believes his own caricature—I certainly hope not—but one thing I do know is that questioning the intentions of one's political opponents makes it awfully hard

to get anything done in a representative democracy. As the President himself said, without so much as a hint of irony, we cannot mistake absolutism for principle or substitute spectacle for politics or treat name calling as reasoned debate.

The President won the election. I congratulate him on his victory. It is his prerogative to lay out an agenda and to make an argument—against all evidence—for the efficacy of big government, more Washington spending, and centralization. It is even his prerogative to argue—mistakenly, in my view—that America's greatness somehow rests not on its communities and voluntary associations, its churches and charities, on civil society, but instead on the dictates of Washington. But to suggest that those of us and our constituents who believe otherwise don't want the best interest of our parents or our children or our country's future is, at best, needlessly provocative; at worst, it suggests a troubling inability to view those who don't happen to share your opinions as beneath you.

To suggest, as one of the President's spokesmen did earlier this week, that both the American political system and those who belong to the party of Lincoln aren't worthy of this White House or its agenda isn't the way to get things done. It makes it impossible to tend to problems we simply have to face up to and that we will only solve together. Frankly, it calls into question the President's own belief in the wisdom and the efficacy of the constitutional system of checks and balances that the Founders so wisely put in place.

The postinaugural period is usually a chance to pivot to governing after a long campaign. It is an opportunity for Presidents to reach out to the minority and to forge compromises. But that is not what we are seeing this time around. Even before Monday we all noted the harsh change in tone, the reboot of the campaign machine, and how, instead of offering an olive branch to those who disagree with him, the President had already decided to transform his campaign operation into a weapon to bulldoze anyone who doesn't share his vision. Well, I would suggest that one thing the American people don't want is a permanent campaign. That is the last thing the American people are looking for—a permanent campaign. They want us to work together on solutions to our problems. And deficits and debt are right at the top of the list.

I wish to suggest this morning the President rethink the adversarial tone he has adopted in recent weeks. Our problems are simply too urgent and too big for the President to give up on working with us. I appeal to him once again to work with us on the things we can achieve together, and let us start with the deficit and the debt. Because the only way we will be able to tackle these problems is by doing it together.

If he refuses, if he insists on spending the next 4 years pushing a polarizing hard-left agenda instead, I assure him he will meet a determined opposition not only from Republicans in Washington but from the very people he seems to believe are squarely on his side in the push to remake government in his image.

The irony in the President's attacks, of course, is that the kind of reforms Republicans are calling for are the only conceivable route to saving the programs the President claims he wants to protect. Failing to reform the entitlement programs of the last century now—right now—is the best way to guarantee they no longer exist in their current form. I mean, one could practically hear the ring of the cash register with every new promise the President made. At a time when we can all see the failure of such policies by simply turning on the news, he seems blissfully—blissfully—unaware of the fact that from Athens to Madrid the sad, slow death of the left's big government dream is on display for all to see. If we want a less prosperous, less dynamic, less mobile society, that is the way to go—just “Europeanize” America.

The President's vision of an all-powerful government that rights every wrong and heals every wound may warm the liberal heart, but it is completely divorced from experience and from reality. So today I wish to do my part to bring the President and his allies in Congress a little closer down to Earth. I know it may be hard for them to accept, but the reality is this: We have a spending problem—not a taxing problem, a spending problem.

Let's take a look at the chart to my right. The green represents historic and projected tax revenue. And we can see it goes right straight across here out to 2040. The tax increases of 3 weeks ago were delivered by operation of law. In other words, the law expired and all of the Bush tax cuts were over. The Congress, 2 hours after everybody's taxes went up—in other words, after all the Bush tax cuts expired—restored tax relief for 99 percent of the American people, and they did it on a permanent basis to guarantee we wouldn't have another cliff, as we inevitably have. When a law sunsets, we have a cliff.

So the President was able to get some new revenue by operation of law, and that represents this dark blue line right across here. You can see that is pretty steady out to 2040.

The President, of course, said that wasn't nearly enough. He said: We need more taxes, and we will be back asking for more taxes later. So as nearly as we can tell, based on what he has said, the taxes he would like to add to the ones he got by operation of law 2½ weeks ago is this light blue line right across here.

If the President were given all the tax increases he says at the moment he wants, that would provide this amount of revenue going out to 2040. As you

can see, that doesn't do anything to solve the problem because the red represents spending in the past and the spending escalation that will occur if we don't do anything to solve the spending problem.

Look at this line dramatically going up to 2040. So as you can see, there is not enough revenue we can raise without completely shutting down the economy to solve the problem. In fact, it produces a rather static and totally insignificant amount of revenue in order to deal with the massive spending problem.

So this constant demand for more and more tax increases on, I guess, whom people assume is the more successful guy down the street may be a great campaign tactic, but it doesn't do anything to solve the problem. Even if the President were able to get every bit of taxes he wants, we still have an enormous gap in spending if we don't deal with the real problem, which is spending. We have a spending addiction. I didn't make this up. This is a fact. This is reality.

So the tax issue is over. Congress has restored permanent tax relief for 99 percent of the American people. Even if the President were to get—and he will not—any more tax revenue, it is perfectly obvious that doesn't do anything to solve the problem.

So the challenge for us—and looking at the chart we can see—is revenue today is just about where it has been for the past 30 years or so. The President spent nearly his entire first term arguing that we needed to tax the so-called rich to solve our fiscal woes. He harangued Congress about it. He argued for it in rallies and debates. He threatened to push us over the cliff if he didn't get his way.

In the end, by operation of law he got part of what he asked for. And the reason he got it, as I said earlier, is because the tax relief we passed in 2001 and 2003 carried an expiration date. President Obama got some of the tax increases he wanted because the law expired. Then Congress, led by Republicans, voted to make Bush-era tax rates permanent for 99 percent of all Americans. Now, permanency is important. It has been kind of lost on the general public, but the importance is we don't have another cliff, another expiration date where all of a sudden everything changes.

Given how much time he devoted to that one topic, one would think his tax hike would have closed the deficit, eliminated the entire national debt, and left us with extra cash to spare. But do you see that tiny little blue line I pointed to right here? That is how much additional revenue he got. This blue area is the revenue he says he wants. He will not get it; but if he did, it is pretty apparent it has nothing whatsoever to do with solving the spending addiction.

So if this revenue doesn't come anywhere close to solving the problem, the real challenge, obviously, is how we are

going to control all of this red. What do we do about this? Well, we are clearly spending way more than we take in. The real uptick, interestingly enough, occurs about the time the President took office. It has been hard enough to find ways to close the President's trillion-dollar deficits. But as I just pointed out, they are nothing next to what is going to hit us when tens of millions of baby boomers reach retirement age—nothing compared to what is heading our way.

I pointed out the massive slope. That is what is headed our way. Nothing short of a bipartisan effort is going to fix this problem, and there is only one way we can do it. We can't tax our way out of this problem. The revenue question is behind us. The law we voted for, as I said, made current tax rates permanent. I am pretty confident not a single Republican in the House or Senate will vote to raise any more taxes. But even if we were to do that, all the taxes the President asked for would only put us here in 2040. And look at what would be spent.

So the reality the President needs to face—and quickly—is that there is no realistic way to raise taxes high enough to even begin to address this problem. That is why Republicans are saying we need to start controlling spending, and we need to do it now. That is why if the President wants to do something good right now, he should put us out of the liberal wish list and put us out of the character attacks and join us in this great task. It is the transcendent issue of our time.

If we don't fix this problem, we don't leave behind for our children and grandchildren the kind of America our parents left behind for us. There is no bigger issue, even though it got scant mention in the State of the Union.

Now, I have no animus toward the President. I just want to see him do something about the problem because the longer we wait, the worse the problem becomes. The more we delay the inevitable, the less time younger Americans will have to plan for the reforms we make today. That is simply not right.

So the President has a choice. He can paint himself as a warrior of the left and charge into battle with failed ideas we have already tried before; he can demean and blame the opposition for his own failure to lead; he can indulge his supporters in a bitter, never-ending campaign that will only divide our country further; or he could take the responsible road. He can help his own base come to terms with the mathematical reality.

Some people over there are living in a fantasy world—a world that doesn't exist. He could reach out to leaders in both parties—and all of the members in both parties—and negotiate in good faith. We would be happy to give him credit. That is fine by me. If boosting his legacy is what it takes and it helps the country, that is all the better.

If my constituents believe they are working to help make their future a

little better and a little brighter, great. But we can't waste any more time denying the reality that is staring each of us in the face. There is only one way to solve this problem, and that is to do something about this spending addiction that is going to sink this country and turn us into Greece.

Senate Republicans are ready to help the President solve this problem. I hope we have an opportunity to do so. Madam President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I wonder if I might pose a question to the Republican leader, if he would re-take the floor.

Mr. McCONNELL. I would be happy to respond.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I want to congratulate the Republican leader for his remarks.

Here is my question. We have arrived at a time when we have a newly elected President who has had a fine inaugural day. He has an agenda that he wants to follow which he announced in his inaugural address. It is not an agenda that most of us on this side agree with, but he has an agenda that he wants to follow in his second term, all of which would ensure—in his eyes—his legacy as a President.

But isn't there one thing that in order to get to that agenda—or any other thing—he and we have to do, and that is to address the debt? Isn't the very best time—isn't the very best time to do something difficult, something nobody wants to talk about, something that is hard—the best time to do that is at a time when we have a divided government, a Democratic President, a Republican House, and 30 or 40 or 50 of us Senators on both sides of the aisle who have been saying for 2 years that we are ready to fix the debt?

Isn't this an opportunity now? Not just because it is a divided government, but because the House of Representatives today may very well create a 2-month or 3-month window during which we can address all of these issues if we had Presidential leadership?

Mr. McCONNELL. I say to my friend from Tennessee, it is counterintuitive. But one could argue that a divided government—which we have had more often than not since World War II—has produced four of the most significant accomplishments for our country in modern times.

In the Reagan administration, President Reagan and Tip O'Neill, the Democratic Speaker of the House, agreed to raise the age for Social Security to save Social Security for another generation. Reagan and Tip O'Neill did the last comprehensive tax reform.

Bill Clinton and a Republican Congress did welfare reform, arguably the most important piece of social legislation in recent times. And Bill Clinton and a Republican Congress actually balanced the budgets in the late 1990s.

My friend from Tennessee is correct. Divided government actually is the

perfect time—some would argue even the only time—we can do tough things, hard-to-explain things that need to be done to save the country. So I hate to miss the opportunity presented by a divided government to tackle the transcendent issue of our times.

The President talked about a lot of things, and that is all interesting, but it had nothing to do with fixing the country. Until we fix this problem, we will not have the kind of country for our children and our grandchildren that our parents left behind for us.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I wonder if I might pose one more question to the Republican leader after making a short statement.

I came to this body as a young lawyer-legislative aide to Senator Howard Baker a long time ago, in 1967. I remember very well Senator Baker's story about how the civil rights bill of 1968 was passed. I have discussed this with the Republican leader before. He knows that era as well or better than I do.

But there was a time when Senator Baker said he was in Everett Dirksen's office—he is the man who had the job that Senator McCONNELL now has. He was the Republican leader then. He said he heard the telephone ring. He heard only one end of the conversation, but Senator Dirksen was saying: No, Mr. President, I cannot come down and have a drink with you tonight. I did that last night, and Luella is very unhappy with me. And that was the conversation.

About 30 minutes later there was a rustle out in the outer office of the Republican leader's office—the very office that Senator McCONNELL now holds. Two beagles, followed by the President of the United States, came in. Lyndon Johnson, the President, said to the Republican leader: Everett, if you won't have a drink with me, I am down here to have one with you. And they disappeared in the back room for 45 minutes.

The point of all that is not their socializing. The point was it was in that very office, the Republican leader's office, that in 1968, the next year, the civil rights bill was written and enacted. Lyndon Johnson got the credit for that in history but Everett Dirksen made it possible, and there were at that time many more Democrats in the Senate than Republicans.

What I want to say to Senator McCONNELL, the Republican leader, the question I want to ask him, is this. He has seen the U.S. Senate and Presidency for the last number of years. He has seen many relationships between the President and leaders of the opposite party. He knows how this place works. My sense of the Republican leader and of the large majority of us is that we wish to see a result. We wish to see a result on this very tough issue of saving Social Security, saving Medicare, saving Medicaid, saving these programs on which seniors depend. I wonder if the Republican leader would

agree with me that despite the fact that we engage every day in political matters, that we have big differences of opinion, that on this issue, without Presidential leadership, we cannot get a result and that there are a lot of us on both sides of the aisle who are ready to work with the President to fix the debt?

Mr. McCONNELL. I say to my friend from Tennessee—in many ways it is a statement of the obvious but a lot of people forget it—there is only 1 person in America out of 307 million Americans who can sign something into law and only 1 person in America who can deliver the members of his party to support an agreement that he makes. The only way to get an outcome on the biggest issue of our time is with Presidential leadership. So it was disappointing to see scant reference in the State of the Union. Of course that is just one speech and I have not given up hoping that this President can make solving the transcendent issue of our time one of his premier accomplishments.

The point I think the Senator from Tennessee and I are making this morning is there are potential partners on this side of the aisle to make this happen. I hope we will not lose this opportunity once again to deal with the biggest issue in the country.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I thank the Senator from Kentucky for extending his time on the floor. On my own I wish to continue that line of thinking a little bit.

It is traditional that when we have a new President, a newly inaugurated President, that he has a pretty good opportunity to get what he asks; that it is a time of maximum leverage, it is a time to do important things, it is a time to do difficult things, it is a time to do things that otherwise might not get done.

Presidents are defined by their skills—their communication skills, their electoral ability—but they are also defined by their capacity over a period of years to identify the hard issues that are important to our country and cause people, as the President said in his address day before yesterday, to work together to solve those problems. Now the problem is whether you want to raise taxes on the guy down the street with the biggest house. That is not so hard to do. The problem is to spend money that you do not have—because you can do it; that is not so hard to do. If the problem is to address a disaster to help people who are in desperate shape, there might be some debate about whether it is really a disaster or not but it is not hard to do because in the end it is going to happen. What Presidents are remembered for is dealing with important, difficult crises.

President Clinton is remembered for a number of things but one of the things he did was challenge the conventional thinking in his own party to

deal with welfare reform. It would not have happened if he had not done it. It would not have happened if he had not done it because a Republican could not have made the argument. A President's job, according to George Reedy, the former press secretary to Lyndon Johnson, is three things: One is to see an urgent need, two is to develop a strategy to meet the need, and the third is to persuade at least half the people he is right.

President Nixon in the early 1960s went to China. That seems like ancient history but that was straight against the core of the Republican Party at that time. That was something that was inconceivable for a Republican President to do, given the history of mainland China and Taiwan, as they were both called.

There have been many times in our history when Presidents have had to do the hard work. President George H.W. Bush made a budget agreement which may have caused him to lose the election in 1992 because it angered a number of Republicans. But it also helped balance the budget and gave us a period of time in the 1990s when that budget agreement plus a good economy gave us an actual surplus of funding.

I sense that there is at the White House a feeling, two things I wish to disabuse the White House of. The first is that the budget problem is not a real problem. I cannot believe people at the White House think that. Everybody knows it is. Senator McConnell gave a very good explanation of what was going on there. But let me say it this way: In 2025, according to the Congressional Budget Office, every dollar of taxes we collect will go to pay for Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and interest on the debt, and there is nothing left for national defense, National Laboratories, Pell grants for education, highways, or the investments that we need to make in research to grow this country. It all goes for Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and the interest on debt, every single penny we collect. And that is only 12 years away. That is not me talking. That is the Congressional Budget Office saying that. The Medicare trustees have said that in 2024 the Medicare Program will not have enough money to pay all of its bills. Whose bills? Bills of seniors, bills of Tennesseans, many of whom are literally counting the days until they are old enough to be eligible for Medicare so they can pay their medical bills. It would be a tragedy if that day arrived and there were not enough money to pay the bills. But the Medicare trustees, who by law are supposed to tell us these things, say that day will come in 2024. It is just 11 years away and that is the day for people already on Medicare and people who are going to be on Medicare.

Medicaid, which is a program for lower income Americans, is an important program. As Governor, I dealt with it in my State. But when I was

Governor, it was 8 percent of the State budget. Today it is 26 percent of the State budget. It is soaking up almost every dollar that would go to higher education. As a result, students around the country are wondering: Why are my tuition fees going up? It is because of Washington's Medicaid Program requiring States to make decisions that soak up money that otherwise would be used to fund education.

In our State of Tennessee, 30 years ago the State paid 70 percent of the cost of going to the University of Tennessee. Today it pays 30. And Medicaid is the chief culprit.

Everyone knows this. The President's own debt commission has told him this and suggested a way to deal with it. Forty or fifty of us on both sides of the aisle have been working together, meeting together, having dinner together, writing bills together, trying to come up with plans to do it. Senator CORKER, my colleague from Tennessee, has developed a bill on which I am his prime cosponsor which says we have found a way to strengthen Medicare and other entitlements by reducing the growth in spending. We understand this.

We passed a Budget Control Act a couple of years ago. People said they didn't like it. It was not so bad because it took 38 percent of the budget, which is all of our discretionary spending—including national defense, national parks, national labs—and said it will go up at about the rate of inflation. This is before we get to the so-called sequester. But what about the rest of the budget? That is the automatic stuff we do not even vote on: Medicare, entitlements, all this? It is going up at about three to four times the rate of inflation. It is going to bankrupt these programs. Seniors will not be able to have their medical bills paid and the country will be bankrupt. That is no overstatement. The former Comptroller of the Currency says that. President Clinton says this is an urgent problem. The former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff says the national debt is the single biggest threat to our national security. Why are we not dealing with it? I think we are not dealing with it, A, because it is hard to do; B, because on both sides of the aisle we have not been effective in dealing with it before.

I remember when we had an all-Republican cast of characters here in town—President Bush, a Republican majority—we tried to reduce the growth of Medicare and we could not get the votes to do that.

This is not easy to do, but Robert Merry, who wrote a book about President Polk, had lunch with some of us yesterday, made this statement: "In America's history every crisis has been solved by Presidential leadership or not at all."

Whether it was Lincoln in the Civil War or Reagan and Tip O'Neill or Nixon to China or Clinton on welfare reform—we can all identify the crises.

But it takes Presidential leadership to do it. It takes that to do it.

I was a Governor, which is much smaller potatoes. If I sat around waiting for the State legislature, with all respect, to come up with a road program we would still be driving on dirt roads. They were waiting for the Governor to do it. That is how our system works.

I wonder if the President thinks that the debt is not a problem? I cannot imagine anybody at the White House thinks that. This is a problem. If the President does not address it during his two terms he will be remembered by history as failing to do that. His legacy may be a failure to address financial matters that put this country on a road to bankruptcy. Or, if he were to do it, if he were to provide the leadership, he would be—as the Australian Foreign Minister has said, "America is one budget agreement away from reasserting its global preeminence." Why wouldn't President Obama want to be known as the President who caused America to reassert its global preeminence by dealing with a budget agreement during the first 3 months of his term and then he can get on with his agenda, about which we can argue? That leaves me with only one thought: That the President thinks we don't want to do it. We do want to do it and it is a misunderstanding if he thinks that.

I know the Republican leader would not mind me saying he is a wily, clever tactician who knows the Senate as well as anyone here. But if you look carefully, when we got down to the last few days of the year and needed an agreement on taxes, the Republican leader was in the middle of the agreement. When we needed an agreement to try to avoid default on the debt, the Republican leader was the one who was in the middle of doing that.

I think if the White House thinks that the Republican leader or we on the Republican side do not want to fix the debt, they are badly misunderstanding where we are and who we are. I do not know how we can say it more clearly. We have written bills that do it. We have held dinners to talk about it. We have made public statements with Democrats, 30 or 40 of us at a time, saying we support Simpson-Bowles, we support Domenici-Rivlin, or we support this or we support that. What is missing? Two words: Presidential leadership. This is not a partisan comment. It just does not work unless the President lays out his plan.

Some say the President does not want to lay out his plan. He has to lay out his plan. He is the President. We are just legislators. Senator CORKER and I have put out our plan. Who pays attention to that? Madam President, \$1 trillion in reductions and a \$1 trillion increase in the debt ceiling—it is out there. That is not going to work. However, if President Obama, with his skills, calls together Simpson and Bowles or his advisers and says: Here is

my plan to save Medicare, here is my plan to save Medicaid, here is my plan to fix the debt, and I want bipartisan support to do that, he will get it. At first, because it is a difficult issue, everybody will say: Oh, no, we can't do it that way. We need to sit down, talk, and come up with a result. I think the Republican leader has shown he is prepared and willing to do that. He has said it and done it on other issues. I don't know what else the rest of us can do to show that.

What I am trying to respectfully say today, as much as anything, to the President of the United States is congratulations on your inauguration. I was there. I was proud to participate in it and have the opportunity to speak for a minute and a half about why we celebrate for the 57th time the inauguration of an American President. We celebrate it because our country is distinguished from most other countries in the world by the peaceful transition or reaffirmation of the largest amount of power in the world. We have our political contests, and then we have the restraint to respect the results.

After winning the election, it is important, first, to get the fiscal house in order. The time to do it is while we have a divided government. The time to do it is while the President is at the peak of his popularity. The time to do it is while the House of Representatives—the Republican House—has created a window of 2 or 3 months to deal with all the fiscal issues. The time to do it is after 2 years of discussion with Republicans and Democrats in a bipartisan way about the need to fix the debt and the importance of it for the country.

My hope is that as the President and his advisers look at the Senate, they see a willingness to solve the problem of fixing the debt in a bipartisan way. I get the feeling they don't believe that about us. I don't know what else we can do to cause them to believe that. There is not the same kind of comfortable, back-and-forth relationship there should be. I have heard some people say: Well, the Johnson-Dirksen days are ancient history. That was a long time ago. However, human nature doesn't change. Human nature doesn't change in 50 years, 100 years, or 500 years.

There is plenty of good will across the aisle and on this side of the aisle, at the beginning of this term, to work with a newly inaugurated President and say: Mr. President, we are ready to fix the debt. Provide us the leadership. No great crisis is ever solved without Presidential leadership in the United States. You are the President; you are the only one who can lay out the plan. We will then consider it, amend it, argue about it, change it, and pass it. After that, we can get onto the President's agenda, about which we will have a difference of opinion, but he will go down in history as the man who was willing to do something hard within his own party, which was to fix the debt

and save the programs seniors depend upon to pay their medical bills.

I hope I can say that in the spirit of someone who participated in the inauguration and admires the President's considerable abilities. I hope he and his advisers stop, take a look, and say: Maybe we were wrong. Maybe this is the time to do it. Maybe we are the only ones who can do it, so let's make a proposal and get started.

I thank the President. I yield the floor and 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.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam 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.

THE BUDGET

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I was pleased to hear a few days ago that Senator SCHUMER said we would have a budget in the Senate. It has been now, I think, about 1,370 days, give or take, since we have had a budget in the Senate, even though plain statutory law requires the Congress to have a budget. Now Senator MURRAY has followed up today, I believe, with a quote saying: "... the Senate will once again return to regular order and move a budget resolution through the Budget Committee and to the Senate floor."

So the Budget Committee has not been meeting. It has not been doing its duty. As the ranking Republican on the Budget Committee, I have been aghast at the process and have talked about it for now for over 1,000 days. So this will be a good step.

My colleagues would like to suggest somehow that they decided to do this out of the goodness of their hearts because it is the right thing to do. But I think the American people have had a belly full of this.

The U.S. House of Representatives has repeatedly passed budgets, but the Senate has refused to even bring one up in committee or on the floor for over 2 years now. They have said they are raising the debt limit for about 3 months, but they have declared that the Senate does not get paid until we have a budget. Right now there is no punishment for not passing a budget. I was a Federal prosecutor for over 15 years and know how to read a code. It has no penalty for failing to pass a budget. It says the Senate should bring up a budget. It should complete the budget process in committee by April 1 and then the full Senate should take it up and it should be completed by April 15. The Senate is given priority: 50 hours of debate, virtually unlimited amendments—an opportunity to debate the financial condition of America.

That is why it has not happened. Senator REID, the Democratic leader for

the last several years, has said it would be foolish to have a budget. What he meant was that it would be foolish politically. Because when you bring up a budget, this is a tough thing. The House did that.

PAUL RYAN offered a historic budget that would change the debt course of America and put us on a sound path. They had to make some tough choices. So they were, of course, attacked in the election—Oh, these are horrible people; they want to throw old people off the cliff and that kind of thing and it was irresponsible—while during this entire process, the Senate was in direct violation of Federal law that required us to bring up a budget. We did not bring it up because it would be foolish, foolish politically, because we have to take tough votes. We have to stand and be counted. Numbers have to be analyzed: How much are you truly going to raise taxes? Oh, well, is that going to change the debt course?

Is this latest \$600 billion tax increase going to change the debt course of America? No; it is not. Our deficit last year was about \$1,080 billion. How much would this tax increase, this \$600 billion, have changed that? That is \$60 billion a year. Instead of \$1,080 billion or so in deficit, our deficit would have been \$1,020 billion. Is that going to fix our problem? No, it will not.

These are difficult problems. These are very difficult problems, and it is not going to be easy. But it was easy to attack the House while not producing a budget. It is a pretty flabbergasting thing to me. So I am glad we are now going to have this process. It will not be easy for Republicans. It will not be easy for Democrats. But what are we paid to do? What responsibility do we have as the Congress—that has the power of the purse—if not discussing the great issues of our time?

We are on an unsustainable debt path. Last year there was another trillion-dollar deficit, and they are projecting we will have a trillion-dollar deficit this year. That is 5 consecutive years of trillion-dollar deficits. I know President Bush was criticized, and correctly sometimes, for spending too much. The highest deficit he ever had in 8 years was \$470 billion. The year before he left it was \$160 billion. President Obama has averaged well over \$1,000 billion a year in an annual deficit ever since.

This is not sustainable, as every expert has told us time and time again. So I am worried about it. Maybe we can move out of these secret meetings where the Senate just sits around and we wait for the people to appear, write us a bill at midnight on December 31—actually 1 a.m. on January 1—that is supposed to handle it and nobody has even read it.

That is what we have been doing for the last 4 years. It has worked out good politically because it has kept an honest discussion of the dangerous path we are on from being part of the public debate. We have to have it part of the