

to \$24 billion. We will again revisit historical reforms to save the U.S. Postal Service, and we will take up legislation to make whole victims of Hurricane Sandy. Each of these initiatives passed the Senate on a bipartisan basis after deliberation and debate during the last Congress but was left to languish by the House.

The Senate will continue to help our fellow Americans recover from Hurricane Sandy before another similar disaster strikes. Hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses were destroyed in New York, New Jersey, and New England, and tens of thousands of Americans were left homeless by this destructive storm. We have a responsibility to aid our countrymen as they rebuild their lives and their communities, as we have after terrible floods, fires, and storms in other parts of our Nation.

Once we complete that vital legislation, the Senate will take action to make this institution we all love—the U.S. Senate—work more effectively. We will consider changes to the Senate rules. Because this matter warrants additional debate, today we will follow the precedents set in 2005 and again in 2011. We will reserve the right of all Senators to propose changes to the Senate rules, and we will explicitly not acquiesce in the carrying over of all the rules from the last Congress. It is my intention that the Senate will recess today rather than adjourn to continue the same legislative day and allow this important rules discussion to continue later this month. I am hopeful and cautiously optimistic that the Republican leader and I will reach an agreement that allows the Senate to operate more effectively in the coming months.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). The Republican leader is recognized.

NEW BEGINNINGS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to start by congratulating President Obama on his inauguration. Presidential inaugurations are always a time for the country to come together. We all feel a certain pride in the event, and we are reminded of how fortunate we are to live in a Nation where we have the ability to choose our leaders freely and resolve our differences in peace. Inauguration Day is also a time for new beginnings, a chance to learn from the mistakes and missed opportunities of the past as we reengage in some vitally important debates about our future.

Too often over the past 4 years, political considerations have trumped the need to put our country on a sound financial footing and a path to prosperity. Today we should recommit ourselves to the task of facing up to our

problems head-on. I understand that the passions of an election can sometimes overshadow the business of governing, but the Presidential campaign is now behind us, and so it is my hope that the President will finally be willing to do what Republicans have been asking him to do since his first inauguration 4 years ago, and that is to work with us on identifying durable solutions to the problems we can only solve together, to put aside those things we know we can't agree on and focus on what we can.

We should start with spending and debt because if we don't get a handle on that, nothing else matters. If we don't work together to strengthen our entitlement programs, they will go bankrupt. Automatic cuts will be forced on seniors already receiving benefits, rendering worthless the promises they have built their retirements around. It is nice to say, as the President did yesterday, that these programs free us to take the risks that make our country great, but if we don't act to strengthen and protect them now, in a few years they simply won't be there in their current form. And if we don't work together to control the debt, then the cost of our interest payments alone will eventually crowd out funding for things we all agree on—from defense, to infrastructure, and assistance for those who need it most. In short, the debate we are now engaged in over the growing Federal debt is about much more than numbers on a page; it is about the cost of inaction in terms of promises broken, jobs lost, and dreams deferred. That is why there is simply no more time to waste.

Over the past 4 years, while the President focused on reelection and too many Senate Democrats focused on avoiding tough decisions, the debt grew by more than \$6 trillion. We saw the President blast House Republicans for doing their job and passing a budget while Senate Democrats didn't even propose one. Rather than work with us to save existing entitlements, we saw the President team up with Democrats in Congress to force through a brandnew entitlement that will make it even harder to cover the cost of programs we already have. In short, Democrats have put off the hard stuff until now, and our problems have only gotten worse.

But that was the first term. A second term presents the opportunity to do things differently, and in the Senate that means a return to regular order. Later this week the House plans to send the Senate a bill to address the debt limit in a timely manner. Once we get it, the Senate should quickly respond. If the Senate version is different from the one the House sends over, send it to conference. That is how things are supposed to work around here. We used to call it legislating.

I know a lot of Democrats are afraid of a process that exposes their priorities, particularly on spending and

debt. After nearly 4 years of refusing to pass a budget, they have only now reluctantly agreed to develop a spending plan for the coming fiscal year. All I would say to that is since the revenue question has been settled, I am sure the American people are eager to see what other ideas Democrats might have to bring down our ruinous deficits.

Let me just say that one thing Americans will no longer tolerate is an attitude that says we can put off our work until the very last minute. They are tired of eleventh-hour deals. They are tired of careening from crisis to crisis, and so am I.

The good news is that a return to regular order is the surest way to solve the problems we face. And I hope some of my friends on the other side will agree that there is value in this body actually functioning the way it was intended to. Let's face it. The status quo isn't working. The Senate isn't functioning as it should. It has nothing to do with the process that has served us well for a very long time. But if we work together and strive to avoid some of the bad habits that have developed around here, I truly believe we will be able to achieve the kinds of solutions that have eluded us for the past 4 years and deliver some positive results for the people who sent us here, with time to spare.

We can do better. I know my constituents expect better than what they have been getting from Congress in recent years, and so should we.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for debate only until 12:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Indiana.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I appreciate the remarks of the minority leader, and I think he essentially gets to the point all of us, in this first week for the 113th Congress, need to be focused on and need to address. This is our first workweek back after the inauguration festivities of yesterday, and I think it is an appropriate time for the Members of this body to discuss the challenges that lay before us over the next 2 years.

The most critical and, in my opinion, the most pressing of these challenges is one we have been dealing with for the past 2 years and is now of even more critical importance, and that is the out-of-control government spending that weakens the health of our economy, threatens the security of our country, and jeopardizes opportunities for future generations.

When I arrived here 2 years ago, it was clear the American people were

concerned about out-of-control Federal spending. At the beginning of the President's term 4 years ago, the debt limit stood at \$10.626 trillion plus. In the 4 years of that term, it has risen to over \$16.400 trillion—nearly a \$6 trillion increase.

It is unprecedented in the history of our country to have such out-of-control spending. It has resulted in our borrowing a very substantial amount of each year's budget, which is not healthy whether you are a family or you are a business or you are a State government or you are the Federal Government. The chickens will come home to roost if we continue to do that.

Each American's share of our national debt now is well over \$50,000. That means every new baby born in this country instantly owes the government more than \$50,000.

We have had 4 straight years of trillion-dollar deficits without a budget in this body. The minority leader just talked about that. Hopefully, we will finally have a budget to work off of and a budget for which we can look at what the priorities are and make tough decisions about how we spend taxpayers' money.

We currently spend over \$40,000 a second. These are not partisan numbers, and this should not be a partisan issue. These are the facts. As our former Governor in Indiana, Mitch Daniels, said: Just do the arithmetic. This is not a deep philosophical or ideological issue. It is a matter of basic math.

With financial problems as great as these, it is my hope as we return now to this 113th Congress we will be able to address this fiscal crisis. It is the same hope I had 2 years ago when I joined the 112th Congress. As we know, we went through a series of efforts to begin to address this problem. Many of those were on a bipartisan basis—we had the Gang of 6 and then we had the supercommittee of 12. These were bipartisan efforts. Many of us worked with our colleagues across the aisle to try to put a grand bargain together. Of course, the President had his own commission led by Mr. Bowles and former Senator Simpson. He rejected that. The Simpson Bowles proposal would have been a good blueprint upon which to begin our discussions. I will be talking some more about that and the disappointment—the extreme disappointment—of Mr. Bowles and Mr. Simpson in terms of the inability of this body to address what has been predicted as the most predictable financial crisis in our Nation's history.

We went through this whole process of the fiscal cliff. We, unfortunately, had to pick the lesser of two evils in order to protect nearly 99 percent of taxpayers from drastic tax increases, starting with the lowest to the highest taxpayer. The fiscal cliff deal may have allowed the President to fulfill his campaign promise to raise taxes on millionaires and billionaires, but it did little or nothing to address excessive Federal spending.

So the debate now shifts. The President got his taxes. With revenue off the table, the debate shifts to where it needs to be and should have been in the first place; that is, addressing spending reductions.

Just last week Fitch Ratings warned that America's AAA credit rating is at risk if the Congress and the President increase the debt limit but fail to enact a "credible medium-term deficit reduction plan." We can expect to see more headlines like this if we do not come together and take action to deal with our country's debt obligations.

In the coming days and weeks I will be speaking in this Chamber and outlining what I believe are rational steps we need to take to get our fiscal house in order. The easy thing to do, and the way Congress has operated over these past 2 years, is to look at our fiscal situation and say: Well, we have more time; or we can deal with this after the next election. While I thought that was exactly the wrong tactic to take, that is what happened. There were a series of efforts, but each one ended up so-called kicking the can down the road or postponing the day of decision.

This is the day of decision. This is the hour of decision. This is the time when we have to step up now and address our out-of-control spending. We have had that next election. The President has been reelected for 4 years. Members have been reelected. We have this challenge now in front of us. Continuing with the status quo, governing by a crisis, and failing to address our spending problem must be unacceptable.

Mr. President, 2013 is the year. In 2014 we are back in another election. We all know the precious 6 to 9 to 12 months that lay before us is the time—post-election, with the President's reelection and new Members here—this is the time we have to step up and address our debt and deficit problem.

If we do not do so now, most experts who look at this, whether they are liberal or conservative, nonpartisan or partisan, ideological or nonideological, have virtually all come to the conclusion that unless we address this now in 2013, with an election year in 2014, 2015 will be too late.

We have seen what is happening in Europe. We see what is happening in Japan. We see what is happening around the world—a world hungry for America to lead, to address its problem, not by pushing it down the road, not through avoiding tough decisions, but addressing the real issue before us that impacts the future of this country and the future of generations to come.

So now is the time, now is the hour of decision that we have to take to go forward and address this problem. As I said, I will be using this platform and others as a way to address what I believe we need to go forward with, not only looking at the larger picture but also looking at how this government spends way beyond its means, spends money that it does not have, wastes

money through bureaucracy and waste and failed efforts, tries to do more than it should or could or is able, and I want to document some of those—everything from the macro to the micro, from the absurd to the bureaucratic to the necessary tough decisions, particularly in regard to our entitlements that have to be addressed in order to preserve and save those programs for not only current beneficiaries but for future beneficiaries.

Mr. President, I appreciate the opportunity to begin this process, and I think each of us must dedicate ourselves to the challenge that lies before us. That challenge is dealing with our out-of-control fiscal situation, that if not controlled will bring this country down and continue this economic malaise that we are currently in.

With that, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

CHANGING SENATE RULES

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about our efforts to change the Senate rules. As we began the 113th Congress on January 3, Senators MERKLEY, HARKIN, and I submitted a resolution to reform the Standing Rules of the Senate. Thirteen of my colleagues have signed on to cosponsor our resolution.

When we submitted the resolution, we agreed with the majority leader that it would be best to have the debate about reforming our rules after the inauguration. I appreciate his willingness to work with us on this important issue. Although we postponed the debate, we preserved the right of a simple majority of this body to amend the rules in accordance with article 1, section 5 of the Constitution.

Senate Resolution 4, our proposal to reform the rules, is simple, it is limited, and it is fair. Again, we are not ending the filibuster. We preserved the rights of the minority. Here is what we are proposing: an end to the widespread abuse of silent filibusters. Instead, Senators would be required to go to the floor and actually tell the American people why they oppose a bill or nominee in order to maintain a filibuster. Debate on motions to proceed to a bill or to send a bill to conference would be limited to 2 hours. Postcloture debate on a nominee, other than a Justice of the Supreme Court, would be limited to 2 hours rather than the current limit of 30 hours.

These are sensible changes. These are reforms we are willing to live with if