

you simply say, give flexibility, the Transportation Department has very little flexibility because many of its funds are off limits. The highway trust fund, for instance, isn't affected by sequestration because those are our nickels and dimes that go into the gas tax per gallon, which wasn't affected by sequestration. An extremely high and disproportionate number of the Transportation Department's expenditures are air traffic controllers themselves.

We have this problem. As Leader REID pointed out, we have other problems—stopping cancer research and cutting back on NIH and NSF, which has always been our seed corn. NIH created a biopharmaceutical industry that is second to none and employs millions of people in your State and mine. NSF research basically created the Internet, which has created millions of jobs and makes the U.S. industry the envy of the world.

So we are cutting our seed corn, the kinds of programs for our homeless veterans, and the kinds of programs for our homebound seniors. The meat-ax approach of sequestration cuts those across the board.

My preference would be to close some tax loopholes to get rid of sequestration. I don't think we should give tax breaks to oil companies. We should not give tax breaks to companies that send jobs overseas. That would be my preference. But we know our friends on the other side of the aisle are against any revenue increases right now, so to put this on the floor immediately would be an exercise in futility.

The leader's plan is the right plan. It is ingenious. We have \$600 billion on the budget that we know we won't spend the vast majority of because no one believes we will have troops in Iraq or Afghanistan 5 years from now. Yet that money is sitting there on our budget and preventing cancer research, air traffic controllers, and money for homeless vets from being used where it was supposed to be.

So the proposal to take a certain amount of money out of the OCO—the overseas contingency operations—which we know we won't spend, makes no sense. Now you say: Well, you know you won't spend it; it is a gimmick.

It is not a gimmick. It is sitting there in the budget occupying space and could be used by these other agencies. And to insist the OCO continue is causing real pain, causing our economy not to grow as quickly, causing vulnerable people to be hurt, and causing research—the seed corn of America—to decline.

Our colleagues on the other side of the aisle are saying that President Obama is to blame for these delays. He has very little choice if we don't change things, and this is a way to change things.

If we want to get rid of these delays, which we all on both sides of the aisle very much desire, I would propose to my colleagues that the solution proposed by the majority leader is the best

way to go given the political necessities on the other side, the desire not to have any revenues—even closing certain tax loopholes.

So I would hope we could come together and vote on this solution. Cutting the OCO has been supported by Republicans. I remember Senator Kyl, a former Senator from Arizona, was advocating this late last year to deal with the doc fix, the DRGs, and other things. The people will come together on this. So I hope we can vote for this proposal, put the air traffic controllers back to work off their furloughs, get rid of these delays, and then come together in a grand agreement in time for the September budget.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— S. 788

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. 788.

My friends on the other side have had this legislation for a short time, not a long time, but it is not that difficult to understand. I have tried to explain it the best I can.

I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. 788, the text of which is at the desk, which is a bill to suspend the fiscal year 2013 sequestration and offset that with funds from the Overseas Contingency Operations; that the bill be read three times and passed; and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. Madam President, reserving the right to object, and I plan to object, I will take some time to explain why I object.

What is happening in the Senate is phenomenal, and I want the American people to see this. The Federal Government is 89 percent bigger than it was 10 years ago. We just heard the majority leader say flexibility can't work because we are already dealing with the same amount of money—89 percent more than we were 10 years ago.

I didn't vote for the Budget Control Act. I think sequester is a stupid way to cut spending. But I want us to understand exactly what is going on. This is a contrived situation because no effort—zero effort—by the FAA or the Department of Transportation has been made to have any flexibility in terms of how they spend their money. They have made no request for a reprogramming of funds within the FAA. They have over \$500 million unobligated sitting in balances that aren't obligated, so none of this had to happen. This has been a created situation.

I want my colleagues to think for a minute about the number of people who didn't make it to their aunt's funeral yesterday because of a contrived

situation; the number of people who may not get to the birth of a grandchild; the number of business meetings that aren't going to occur because we have created a contrived situation. Our problem is we are continuing to spend money we don't have.

So we have taken FAA, we have put the airlines at risk—and they are, by the way, suing the government because they haven't made a good-faith effort to do it in another way—and we have created a situation where we are going to discomfit and inconvenience hundreds of thousands of American people on a political point because we can't cut any spending in Washington.

Let me outline for my colleagues a moment what the FAA could do. They could save \$105 million by cutting their overhead expenses for consultant supplies and travel by 15 percent. That is one-seventh or one-sixth of all the money they need to keep all their controllers on. They could save \$41 million by eliminating funding the President has already recommended eliminating in terms of programs for airports that are on the national plan of integrated airports. They have already recommended doing that, but they are not doing that. They have the flexibility to do that but they are not doing it. That is another \$41 million.

They can save \$6 million on small community air service—flexible. They could reduce the Airport Improvement Program. They have plenty of flexibility there. That is up to \$926 million. They could do that. They could reduce or eliminate—and they would have to have our help to do this—the Essential Air Service Program where at many airports across this country we are paying a \$1,200 subsidy to fly less than 10 people a day out of an airport less than 90 miles away from a major airport. So to say there is no flexibility, they do not want any flexibility. And the fact is our country is headed toward bankruptcy.

Let me talk about OCO for a minute. It is true OCO money is in the budget, because we thought we were going to have to spend it. But every penny of that money will be borrowed money—borrowed money. So if we weren't going to spend it, we are saying now we are going to go over here and take care of sequestration? A 4-percent cut in the Federal budget—4 percent. It is only 89 percent bigger than it was 10 years ago and we can't find 4 percent within the FAA?

Let me outline a few other things going on at the FAA. They have posted requirements for nonessential employees since sequestration started. They have made no efforts at flexibility. They have made no efforts to do what they could do to keep the most number of controllers working.

This isn't going to happen. We are not going to borrow money anymore against the future of our kids when in fact we have other ways to do it.

I will make my final point. The President is the CEO of this country.

He can make this happen with the least amount of inconvenience for the American people. The question is: Will he or not? Will he or not? Will we play this political shell game with the lives and perhaps the safety and certainly the inconvenience of the traveling public in this country to make the point there is no way we are going to cut any spending out of the Federal Government when it is 89 percent bigger? And, by the way, it is 48 percent bigger under President Obama.

It is a real choice. America is going to get a real choice: Can we in fact respond in a prudent way to run this government in an efficient manner and eliminate low-priority items and put money for items such as NIH in a priority? We can. The question is: Do we have the will to do that?

What we are hearing from the majority leader is: No, we don't want to cut anything. We will take some funny money that doesn't really exist, and if we use it, we are going to borrow, and that will take all the pain away. There won't be any oversight, no streamlining, no priorities made in terms of how we spend money.

Every other American family and business has had to make those decisions. Yet we are refusing to do it. When we asked the President: Do you want the flexibility, he said no. He would veto the bill that gives him the flexibility to put high priorities up here and low priorities down here. That tells me it is all political. It doesn't have anything to do with the FAA; it has to do with creating an event so we won't do what is in the best long-term interests of the country.

With that, I object.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— S. 16

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to Calendar No. 19, S. 16, the Inhofe-Toomey bill on flexibility, with an amendment that reflects the current changes for sequestration; that the bill be read three times and passed, as amended, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard to the prior request.

Is there objection to the following request?

Mr. REID. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, earlier this year the Senate voted on dueling responses through the sequestration. Democrats had a balanced plan—half revenues, half spending. Republicans tried giving flexibility with, of course, no revenues whatsoever. The Senate voted both of these down. We know these plans won't work so there is absolutely no need to repeat what has already failed. So let us try to solve the problem.

I appreciate the mini lecture of my friend from Oklahoma, but it is wrong.

It is good to go back and talk about what has happened. When President Bush took office—and I hate to keep bringing this up; his library is going to be dedicated in a few days—he had a surplus over 10 years of \$7 trillion. When he left office, he had a debt of almost \$2 trillion. Why? Was it because government got bigger? Well, it got bigger because we had two wars, paid for with the \$7 trillion that should have been surplus, but it was all borrowed money. All borrowed money.

During the Clinton years, when Bush stepped into office, President Clinton had created 22 million jobs in 8 years. During President Bush's 8 years, we lost 8 million jobs and lost our entire surplus. So of course those two wars and the tax cuts that were unpaid really created some problems.

The Senator from Oklahoma complains about government is larger than it was 2 years ago. Well, I have talked about that. But one thing my friend fails to acknowledge is Simpson-Bowles. By the way, he voted against that—is that right?

Mr. COBURN. I voted for it.

Mr. REID. That is right. You were with Senator DURBIN and voted for that. Most Republicans voted against that. My liberal friend DICK DURBIN voted for that.

The reason I mention that is because Simpson-Bowles wanted to arrive at a savings of \$4 trillion, as I understand it. We have already done \$2½ trillion. It is not as if we haven't done anything.

I would also talk about my friend from Oklahoma. I know he is smart, and I understand that, but just because you are smart doesn't mean you are always right. We have a situation where this country has been driven by the tea party for the last number of years. When I was in school, I studied government and I learned about the anarchists. They were different from the tea party because they were violent. But they were anarchists because they did not believe in government at any level, and they acknowledged that. The tea party kind of hides that. They do not say we are against government, but that is what it amounts to. They are not doing physically destructive things to buildings and people directly, but they are doing everything they can to throw a monkey wrench into any form of government, whether it is local, State, or the Federal Government. That is what it is all about. So anything they can do to throw a monkey wrench into the wheels of government, they are happy doing that. And I am sorry to say my friend from Oklahoma is helping them, maybe not directly but indirectly, and that is wrong. Government is not inherently bad. Government is inherently good. That is why we have a Constitution, and we direct the activities of this government based upon that Constitution.

We have a situation here that is not good. We have programs being cut all over America. Rather than doing

things with a meat cleaver, as my friend from New York said, we should be doing it with a scalpel—doing things that are fine-tuning and working to eliminate these programs.

My friend asks why doesn't the FAA cut other programs? Listen to this: He wants to cut airport improvement programs. These are job creating. They create jobs at airports—runways, terminals. These are programs that create jobs. Essential Air Service may not mean much to him, but we had a program where—I don't know if it was my friend from Oklahoma but some Republican Senator offered an amendment to get rid of Essential Air Service. One of the places they indicated should be cut is Ely, NV. I said okay, too much per passenger. I will go along with that. I could have stopped that but I didn't do it.

We have had this debate previously. Essential Air Service has been whacked on a number of occasions. There are places in America where Essential Air Service is just what it says, it is essential, to give those rural communities the ability to have an airplane come in there once in a while.

The Congressional Budget Office would give us credit—it wouldn't be toward the deficit—to do something for 5 months and take a little money out of Overseas Contingency Operations. We are going to cut money from that. We are not going to spend all that money that has been set aside to take care of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

It is too bad we are right here with competing unanimous consent requests and the American people are going to continue to suffer—whether it is some little kid not able to go to a Head Start Program or some senior citizen who will miss his Meal on Wheels or the other programs—in addition to the devastation that is going to take place at airports.

Mrs. BOXER. Will my friend yield for a question?

Mr. REID. Sure.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I appreciate Senator REID taking the leadership here, and as I understand it—and I want him to confirm it—what he has done is he has suggested the cuts that are hurting so many of our American citizens be restored and he is paying for that. He is not putting it on a credit card. He is paying for it by taking funds from the overseas account because we are winding down wars. Am I correct that what the Senator is doing is paying a price that equals the amount he is restoring of the sequester?

Mr. REID. That is true.

Mrs. BOXER. And I also want to say to my friend, I understand we are truly suffering in this country. I have examples of people who were turned away from cancer clinics. They can't get their chemotherapy. The Cancer Society—which is not a government entity—has said this is very dangerous.

Is my friend aware that patients are being turned away and not getting the