

legislating as to what the courts should do, and looking at bills that created a post office and the Treasury Department. All those were bills, one passed by the House and one passed by the Senate, and they got together to work out the differences.

In this esteemed tradition, Democrats now wish to resolve our differences over the budget in a conference committee subject to the disinfected of public scrutiny, instead of behind closed doors, as we have done for more than two centuries. A number of Republican Senators have joined Democrats in calling for such a conference. It has now been 51 days since the Senate passed its budget. Even Republicans are asking why can't we go to conference?

This is what the senior Senator from Arizona, a Republican, said last week:

I'm very much in favor of it, and I think we ought to do it right away. . . . After 4 years of complaining about Harry Reid's failure to bring up a budget and then we do one and block conference . . . is incomprehensible.

That was a quote from JOHN MCCAIN.

After 3 years of Republican yearning for such regular order, Democrats assumed every Republican Senator would be enthusiastic to go to conference. But although a few Republicans, such as Senator MCCAIN, have called for a conference committee, Republican leaders have refused for weeks to name conferees, flouting more than 200 years of tradition.

Republican leaders have also refused to explain why they won't go to conference. But the longer the Republicans delay, the more transparent this partisan political tactic is becoming. It is transparent they oppose transparency. They do not want openness in government.

Republicans continue to put off a fiscal compromise until our backs are up against yet another manufactured crisis—a catastrophic default on the financial obligations we have as a country. Republicans hope to use the threat of default as a bargaining chip to extract concessions for tax breaks for the wealthy, extract concessions for drastic cuts to Medicare, extract concessions for more Draconian cuts to programs that keep the elderly, the sick, the disabled, and the most vulnerable Americans from slipping further into poverty.

Even though Republicans caused themselves and the country immense political harm by pursuing this wrong-headed strategy last summer, they are at it again, and this time Republicans aren't even hiding their desire to cause a first-of-its-kind default on our Nation's financial obligations.

Last week, the House of Representatives passed a bill called the "Full Faith and Credit Act." If there were ever an Orwellian name, this is it. In their lexicon, up is down, down is up; east is west, north is south. A bill called the Full Faith and Credit Act? Come on.

This legislation ranks the Nation's debts in order of priority—their priority, a Republican-dominated, tea party-driven House of Representatives. Listen to this. Here is what the legislation says:

In the event of a Republican-forced default, the Nation would stop payments to Medicare, veterans, active-duty military servicemembers, national security personnel, and you name it—everything except paying the debt to China.

In addition to threatening the full faith and credit of the United States, this legislation would cost American jobs, hurt businesses, and tank the economy. And it wouldn't prevent default. If an American family has a mortgage payment, a car payment, and credit card payment, but pays only three of those bills, the family is still in default. The Federal Government lives by the same rules. If we pay China but default on obligations to our veterans, we are still in default. If we pay China but not our Border Patrol, not our FBI, not our law enforcement officers, including drug enforcement, we are in default. If we pay China but not our troops overseas, we are in default.

The Republican approach to default is totally irresponsible. The Republicans know this risky measure is a nonstarter in the Senate. Even if it could pass the Senate—which it won't—President Obama would veto it.

Americans are tired of these protracted fights over the budget caused by the tea party-driven Republicans in Congress. It is through compromise, not through hostage taking or political blackmail, that we can set the Nation on the road to fiscal responsibility. That compromise begins by going to conference on the budget. Americans agree the path to economic prosperity runs through the regular order of this legislative body—a process that honors more than two centuries of work.

Finally, I had hoped we would have an opportunity for the Republican leader to explain why he objects to going to conference on the budget. We informed the Republican side we would ask this consent today, tomorrow, the next day, and every day. Let us hope we don't get to day 62, 63, 64, 65, 75, but the way they are going, I guess they are never going to go to conference.

We informed the Republican side we would ask consent today and every day we are in session. While the Republican cloakroom informed us there was an objection, no Republican was available to explain that objection in person. I did this last week, and again they had no one here. I did the same thing I am going to do here. I am asking for consent, but I will withdraw my request out of respect for the long tradition of comity. This is not comedy but comity.

It is outrageous, first of all, that they block this and then don't have the courage for somebody to stand and object. It speaks volumes that no Republican Senator was available or willing to explain the bizarre objection to a

perfectly reasonable request to go to conference and work out the differences. The only explanation we have had so far came from the junior Senator from Texas where he said: We will go to conference, but you have to agree to what we want before we go to conference. How is that for a deal?

The junior Senator from Texas was not available today, and no other Republican Senator appears willing to stand and explain why Senate Republicans are now standing in the way of a budget. So I will ask this and then I will withdraw it.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H. CON. RES. 25

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 33, H. Con. Res. 25; that the amendment which is at the desk, the text of S. Con. Res. 8, the budget resolution passed by the Senate, be inserted in lieu thereof; that H. Con. Res. 25, as amended, be agreed to; the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the Senate insist on its amendment, request a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses and the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees on the part of the Senate, all with no intervening action or debate.

I would elaborate. This is a process that started being developed in the first Congress that was ever held in this country—1789. My Republican colleagues for years complained about not following regular order. They said we didn't have a budget. We didn't need one, but they said we didn't have one. We didn't do one by resolution, we did one by passing a law. But regardless of that, they came and talked about that.

This is out of line. It is ridiculous. It is unfair to the American people, but it is very obvious what is going on.

I withdraw my request, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). The request is withdrawn.

SANDY HOOK

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Presiding Officer is from the State of Connecticut, and I want the record spread with how much I admire what he and Senator BLUMENTHAL have done in not letting the American people forget about Sandy Hook—not forget about those little tiny boys and girls.

My little grandchildren do not live here. I have three grandchildren, but they are teenagers. My little grandchildren are in Nevada, so I don't have a chance to see them. But I was in church yesterday and saw all these little kids, little beautiful children. To think these little boys and girls, just like the ones I saw yesterday, would be gunned down—shot multiple times, most of them; teachers trying to save these little children just cut down with an automatic weapon.

I admire the two Senators from Connecticut. They are not going to let this fade from our minds. Keep in mind, I

met with the Sandy Hook people on several occasions. They are not asking for anything that is outrageous. Their first step is to say that someone who is crazy—I am sorry, that is not a good term of art—someone who has extreme mental problems should not be able to buy a gun. Someone who is a criminal should not be able to buy a gun. That is all we want. We will settle for that. The people of Sandy Hook will settle for that.

I admire what the Presiding Officer has done and what Senator BLUMENTHAL has done. We cannot let these terrible things that happened in Aurora, CO—someone walks in with a weapon that has a magazine of 100 bullets. He would have killed a lot more, but the gun jammed.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

Mr. REID. I ask the Chair to announce the business of the day.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 5 o'clock p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SESSIONS. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. SESSIONS. I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak as in morning business.

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

IMMIGRATION

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, tomorrow we will continue the markup on the Gang of 8 immigration bill. They have been meeting with businesspeople and special interest groups trying to craft a piece of legislation they can agree to, that they think is good. They didn't have anybody representing mainstream America. They didn't have anyone representing the law enforcement community who would explain how this system ought to work. As a result, their bill doesn't have any kind of improvements in our law enforcement that would be effective.

I wanted to talk today, because we will be going into it tomorrow, about the fundamental question on the nature of our immigration; how much this country would be able to sustain

in a healthy way for immigrants, as well as American workers.

I have been concerned for some time that the numbers are just too large. We are not able to effectively assimilate people in these large numbers. Significantly, we don't have sufficient jobs to allow us to employ them. As the bill stands now, it would have only a negative impact on American workers.

People say: You need to be positive, Sessions. We are growth oriented. We are just going to grow this economy, and there will be plenty of jobs out there. Be like Ronald Reagan, would you? Be sunny all the time. Don't talk negatively. Don't worry about this.

I am looking at some numbers, and I think it is wise for America to be prudent, smart, and careful, before we establish policies we can't sustain, before we establish policies that create more unemployment in America and damage our economy. That could happen.

I asked one of the sponsors of the bill, Senator SCHUMER, how many people would be admitted under the bill. Well, he wouldn't say.

I said: It looks like it might be 30 million; is that correct?

He said: No.

I said: Well, how many is it, Senator SCHUMER?

He didn't say. They have yet to say how many people would be admitted under the biggest change in immigration we have had since at least 1986, and really it is larger in its impact than 1986.

This is an odd thing. Frankly, we ought not to proceed another day in the Judiciary Committee until the sponsors of the bill—and their great advisers who have been meeting for months, aided by the administration and all the staffs they have in Homeland Security and the Department of Justice—can tell us how many people would be admitted. They don't do that, I think, fundamentally because they don't want us to know. They really don't want to acknowledge what a huge alteration in our policies this will have in terms of economics and so forth.

Let's think about it. Here are some of the things we know: We know 11 million people are here illegally—some say 12 million—and they would all be given a legal status. Virtually all would be given a legal status immediately.

They would then immediately be allowed to pursue any job they would like to take. They could go down and apply for the county government, the city government, trucking firms, coal mining companies, oil companies, any good job out there they would like to apply for. That is not happening now because many of them have no identification and aren't able to take anything other than jobs off the books. Some have estimated—supporters of the bill—that at least half of the people here illegally are working off the books in some form or fashion. These numbers are big. We have those numbers.

In addition, there is a plan over the next years to legalize 4.5 million addi-

tional individuals in the so-called backlog. They are really not backlogged in the sense the immigration service isn't processing their papers fast enough, they are backlogged because we had caps on how many in these categories could come in and people apply until they reach the number. Well, they would remove the caps on those. That would be another 4.5 million that would come in.

Then they have a future flow that we are working hard on to analyze with my staff. I don't have the entire immigration service. I don't have the immigration lawyers association. I don't have the chamber of commerce or Richard Trumka to come in and do all the work for me, but we think there will be quite a number of immigrants coming in the future.

The Los Angeles Times—and I will use their number; it seems to be the number others have come up with and may be in the ballpark—they have increased the annual flow by 50 percent. That would be a 50-percent increase. We are supposed to be at about 1 million a year now, and this would increase the legal flow by 50 percent. It could be considerably more. So we estimate that something like 30 million people will be given legal status in the next 10 years, when, if the law were faithfully applied, there would be about 10 or 11 million over the next 10 years given legal status. Yes, of that 30 million, about 10 or so—10-plus—will be those who are already here, but many of those are really not effectively competing for jobs with the American worker, who by a large degree is out of work and needing a job.

First and foremost we are a nation of immigrants. We have always had a generous immigration policy. A million immigrants a year exceeds that of any other country in the world ever, and we are about to absorb a huge number of new people—15 million—and then we are going to increase the flow by 50 percent. So I am asking, can we handle this? That is all I am asking at this point on this subject, and we really should think about that. Don't we owe it to our workers to ask those questions?

Professor Borjas, at Harvard—himself an immigrant and the most serious student of immigration and wages and jobs in America, and he wrote a book on it a number of years ago and still writes papers in contributing to the debate—has demonstrated absolutely, through intense, high-level economic studies, that increases in workers produces reduced wages. Surprise—more workers reduces wages. It allows a business to find a worker without having to pay more money. They would be able to get more people to work for less, and they like that. That is great—for them.

My Democratic colleagues have been pointing out for a long time—and, sadly, there is too much truth in their complaints—that the average wage of the American worker since at least