

to simplify our corporate Tax Code and lower rates for businesses, I expected Republicans all over the country but especially here in Congress to jump for joy. I think there are many people around the country who were satisfied and happy, but the Republican leadership in the Congress surprised me and I think a lot of people by their reaction. Just a few months ago Leader McCONNELL signaled he would be open to a plan to reform the Tax Code. This is what he said:

I'm told President Obama is going to come out for lowering the corporate tax rate. To the extent he wants to do some of these things, our answer is going to be yes.

It is amazing how quickly his answer went from yes to no, no. Republicans have favored corporate tax reform for decades. We have heard them say so. This was one of the mantras during the Presidential campaign. But now that President Obama is proposing it, Republicans are opposing it.

The President's thoughtful approach would couple lower tax rates, corporate tax rates, with investments in job-creating measures, such as roads and bridges and dams, worker training programs, and manufacturing incentives.

He was in the State of Tennessee when he made this announcement. They are a picture book as to how corporate interests there can really move on. They have done a great job in Tennessee, and I would bet that at every corporation in Tennessee they were elated to hear what President Obama had to say yesterday.

It is going to take a balanced approach and include smart spending cuts, closing wasteful loopholes and asking corporations that will benefit from lower tax rates to contribute their fair share. Even Speaker BOEHNER supported this approach in the past. This is what he said just a short time ago:

If we want to put Americans back to work, I think lowering the corporate tax rate is critically important. And to do that, I think we have to look at the tax-expenditure side, the deductions, credits, and other gimmicks that may be in the tax code and that have accumulated over the last 30 years.

I do not say this very often, but Speaker BOEHNER was right.

This is the kind of balanced approach to deficit reduction the American people favor—a simpler tax code that lowers rates, makes our businesses more competitive, but also raises new revenue to invest in job creation. We have learned that the sequestration has already cut 1.6 million jobs, so we need job creation. We need to help the middle class by creating jobs. As President Obama said, if we are going to give businesses a better deal, we need to give workers a better deal also. We can use the money we save by simplifying the Tax Code to create jobs now, right away, jobs that can never be outsourced. Both Democrats and Republicans can get something they want, and the economy gets the shot in the arm it needs.

We have already cut the deficit in half over the last 3 years—that is the yearly deficit—and we have already saved \$2.6 trillion from the accumulated debt. Democrats know there is more to be done. We certainly do. But we will not agree to any plan that balances the budget by killing jobs even more than already and whacking the middle class, and that is while holding the richest individuals and corporations harmless.

Democrats believe we must offset the harsh spending cuts of the last few years with job creation that puts the middle class back on track. To get the economy back to full steam, we should be making targeted investments in areas such as infrastructure and education—things that have always helped America grow and succeed.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, you know there is not much to say about the President's speech yesterday other than that he actually retreated from previous commitments to a more bipartisan, revenue-neutral corporate tax reform and then tried to sell that rejection of bipartisanship as some "grand bargain"—I mean, only in Washington. But let me say this: It really would be nice to see the President work with Congress for a change to get some important work done for the American people. Republicans have been eager to do this all along, but, really, it is almost as if there is a "Gone Campaignin'" sign outside the Oval Office—a "Gone Campaignin'" sign outside the Oval Office. On the rarest of occasions when he does come to the Hill, as he will today, you find out it is basically just for another internal campaign rally with Democrats.

I hope he will finally get serious and make one of his famous pivots—this time in a new direction toward effective policy and away from the never-ending political sideshow. But it is hard to see, especially when you consider that the President's party is now attempting to blow up one of the most genuinely bipartisan accomplishments of the Obama era.

The Budget Control Act that was agreed upon two summers ago represented a commitment from Washington to America, a bipartisan promise to enact \$2.1 trillion in spending control. Last year the slightest hint of fiddling with the spending caps led to a furious response from senior Washington Democrats. It even led to a veto threat from the White House. But now Washington Democrats are tired of bipartisanship. The commitments they made have become an inconvenience to their special interest agenda, so now

they are threatening to shut the government down if they are not allowed to break their word. That is what this appropriations debate we are having is all about. It is about an attempt to blow up an important bipartisan achievement by busting the spending caps to which both parties already agreed.

Republicans do not believe we should be breaking our commitments to the American people, and breaking commitments in order to overspend, as Democrats propose, seems like an even worse reason for them to shut down the government. So I hope they will not. I hope they will think about the "third way" offer we have made to them too—that we would happily discuss exchanging some of the particular cuts they do not like for government reforms, the kinds of innovative ideas that can get our economy back on track and our government back in the black not just in the immediate term but over the long haul. This policy discussion has never been more relevant, especially when we look at what is happening in Detroit and what is happening in Europe, when we realize that the real-world consequences of putting off reform are no longer just abstract or hypothetical, they are here, they are real, and they are now.

The experts tell us that the United States is already on a completely unsustainable fiscal trajectory and that we need to make some big changes today if we want to avoid a similar fate. They also tell us that, unlike Detroit or Greece, America still has some time to chart its own future—but not long. That is why the choices we make today are so important. We can follow the Democratic path to austerity—the path of breaking spending caps wide open and borrowing more money we do not have, of callously rejecting reform and blissfully denying the future. That path inevitably leads to European-style austerity, to the decimation of the middle class, to desperation for the least among us, or we can follow the Republican path to reform and growth, a path of smart choices, innovative reforms, and orienting our economy toward the future. The Republican path not only prevents austerity tomorrow but leads to more jobs and a better economy today. The Democratic path to austerity or a Republican path to reform and growth, these are the choices.

Voting for appropriations legislation that blatantly violates budget reforms already agreed to by both parties moves our country in exactly the wrong direction. It puts us on the Democratic path to austerity. That is one of the many reasons I will be voting against this spending bill, and I urge my colleagues to do the same. It is time to get serious about the challenges we face. It is time to work together to reposition America for growth and prosperity and sustainability in the 21st century.

If the President is willing to get off the campaign trail and show some leadership with his party—convince them

of the positive reforms and the need to actually stick to them—I am confident we can create a better economy today and leave a better future for our children tomorrow. But it is up to him, and his visit today offers a great chance to convey this message to his fellow Democrats.

TRIBUTE TO ROHIT KUMAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I would like to say a few words about my departing deputy chief of staff Rohit Kumar, who announced a few weeks back he would be leaving the Senate at the end of this week.

Many of the Members of the Senate know Rohit pretty well. He has been trolling the floor out here for a long time, telling us on the Republican side what to do and how to do it. He has been a constant presence at my side at just about every legislative battle we have had here in the Senate for the past 6½ years; actually, even before that, when he was working for Leader Frist, and I was over in the whip's office.

So many of us could recount Rohit's many talents, but as his boss it falls on me to do it, and I am happy to do it because we have been through a lot. The first thing to say about Rohit is that his mind is like a trap. He has the answer to literally every question the moment you ask him, and he has usually thought through the politics of it too. That might not sound terribly unusual, but I assure you it is rare in this business to come across somebody who combines a brilliant mind for policy and a brilliant mind for politics in one package, but that is Rohit. He is remarkable that way. It is one of the reasons he has been indispensable to me, not only in the day-to-day stuff but especially on the three major deals I helped broker with Vice President BIDEN, starting with the 2-year extension of the Bush tax cuts in late 2010, the debt limit deal we arrived at in the summer of 2011, and then, of course, the fiscal cliff agreement at the end of last year in which we locked in the Bush tax rates permanently for 99 percent of Americans. That is something we couldn't even do, by the way, when we had a Republican House, a Republican Senate, and a Republican President.

Every one of those agreements involved a lot of work, a lot of nights and weekends, and tremendous focus. We couldn't have done any of them without Rohit. Anything that ever came up in those discussions, Rohit can tell us the upsides and the downsides, where the other side was willing to go and where they weren't. He knew where all the tripwires were, and it is because of these same skills as well as his grasp of Senate rules and procedure that he has become sort of an informal adviser to the entire Republican conference over the years.

It is not at all unusual for me to walk back to Rohit's desk and see him

talking to another Senator in my office—either in person or on the phone. He knows how things work, and folks who are smart know they can call him or swing by if they want to know what is going on or what is possible or what is not on absolutely anything. A lot of other Senators will miss him every bit as much as I will.

Rohit says he was drawn to public service by the example of his parents, both of whom are doctors, and viewed their work as more of a calling than a source of income. His dad is a widely respected and well-known teacher at the university level, and his mom worked at a VA hospital.

Rohit wasn't drawn to medicine, but like his folks he wanted to make a difference, and that is what drew him to politics. He got his start by answering phones for the mayor of Dallas, and then translated that into an internship for Phil Gramm's State office after his sophomore year at Duke. After graduating in just 3 years, he took a job in Senator Gramm's Washington office as an LA, and did that for a couple of years before heading off to law school.

The plan was to become a Federal prosecutor. So he moved down to Charlottesville, stayed there for a clerkship on the Fourth Circuit, and then saw his plan go up in smoke when he called Senator Gramm for career advice. Rohit told him what he was thinking, and Senator Gramm listened. Senator Gramm then told him he thought it would be a much better idea if he came back to the Senate and worked for him instead. Senator Gramm can be pretty persuasive. Rohit agreed, and he has been here ever since.

It wasn't a straight line. About a month after Rohit got here, Gramm announced he wasn't running for reelection. Over the year that followed, Rohit impressed a lot of folks. It wasn't long before Senator Lott picked up the phone and asked him if he would join him in the leader's office. Rohit accepted, and then spent pretty much his entire time there figuring out how to get the Department of Homeland Security up and running in such a way that it wouldn't be hamstrung by union rules.

Over a holiday weekend in late 2002, he got a taste of things to come. President Bush wanted DHS approved, so Rohit and a few other key staffers had a holiday weekend to do it. They started writing the bill on a Thursday night and wrapped it up by Tuesday morning.

Rohit stuck around during the Frist years, gaining even more experience and impressing even more people—including me. When Leader Frist left at the end of 2006, I brought him onto my leadership team, and it has been one of the best hiring decisions I have ever made. As I said, he has been an extraordinary help to me and a great guy to have around. He is not only whip smart, but he has a fantastic sense of humor and work ethic like I have never seen.

I thank Rohit for his dedication and service to me and to the Senate. Since

this is the only opportunity I have ever had to do this, I want to thank Hilary for letting us have him for this long. I think she is here today. I know how supportive she has been of Rohit staying here for so long, and so I want to thank her for that and apologize for all the canceled trips and lost weekends. I know it wasn't always easy to see it in the moment, but he has made an enormous difference not just to me but our country.

I can't promise the transition will be easy. He might want to find a good 10-step BlackBerry recovery program when we finally take it away from him, but I am sure he will figure it out.

With that, I wish Rohit all the best in the future. I know he has a bright one. I understand he will be unemployed after the weekend, but I expect that won't last long.

Rohit, if you ever want to come back, we always have a place for you. Thanks, buddy.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2014

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1243. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1243) making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2014, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Murray (for Cardin) modified amendment No. 1760, to require the Secretary of Transportation to submit to Congress a report relating to the condition of lane miles and highway bridge deck.

Coburn amendment No. 1750, to prohibit funds from being directed to Federal employees with unpaid Federal tax liability.

Coburn amendment No. 1751, to prohibit Federal funding of union activities by Federal employees.

Coburn amendment No. 1754, to prohibit Federal funds from being used to meet the matching requirements of other Federal programs.

Murphy amendment No. 1783, to require the Secretary of Transportation to assess the impact on domestic employment of a waiver of the Buy American requirement for Federal-aid highway projects prior to issuing the waiver.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Kentucky.

AMENDMENT NO. 1739

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to call up amendment No. 1739.

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