

for the budget. They said if we didn't pass a budget we should not get paid. We did pass a budget. Now they won't let us go to conference and finish the work.

What a mess we are in—self-inflicted—because people are in denial around here that there was an election. It was about health care. It was about being moderate. It was about working together. It was about compromise. It was not about who is the Presidential candidate who could lead us into the darkness and despair of complete warfare.

Let's end that warfare. We showed we could do it today. I thank my Republican colleagues who voted to allow us to offer our amendment. I appreciate it so much. I know they are getting yelled at. They should be praised. But it shows, right here in this Senate, that we can come together. We may not like our options or our choices. Believe me, I do not like the amount of money we are spending to run the government. It is really hurting my people back home. But I am not going to shut down the government about it.

Madam President, you are such a great new addition to the Senate. I am disappointed that you are not able to unleash your legislative prowess and move us forward, but we will get past this if we can work together.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I want to share some remarks about the comments. I want to say Senator BOXER is a great advocate and does a good job as chair of our Committee on the Environment and Public Works. Pretty much we have had unanimous votes on bills that came out, Republicans and Democrats voting unanimously on the bills that came out. Sometimes we have differences and we fight over them, but a lot of times things are getting done around here.

But I will just say it is not actually fully correct to say the Republicans opposed the President's health care bill, the Affordable Care Act, ObamaCare. The American people opposed it by huge numbers. They, through an election, a remarkable election, and in some very close wins, found themselves with 60 votes in the Senate of the United States. They had a majority in the House, and they decided to move this bill. They shut out Republicans, moved a partisan bill, and they got it through—even when Scott Brown, if you remember, was running for the Senate in Massachusetts to fill the late Senator Kennedy's seat. He promised he would be the vote that would deny the 60 votes and stop this bill, and he won in Massachusetts. But he couldn't get here quickly enough. They were able to get the bill passed before he got here to kill it.

This has never been a popular bill and the polling number shows it is even

less popular today than it was when they rammed it through. So this is not a little bitty matter. It threatens our Republic, I think, in a lot of different ways. I have talked about that earlier. But I would say—to understand the dynamics on the floor of the Senate—you have to understand that the majority leader, having gotten his bill passed on Christmas Eve 2009, after all kinds of maneuvers to get that accomplished, has protected it from any further debate and discussion. He has blocked any ability to bring up the legislation and to be able to amend it and fix some of the obvious flaws in it. One of the top drafters, the Senate Democratic chairman of the Finance Committee, has called it a train wreck, and it at least at needs reform. It really cannot succeed in its present form. Senator REID has blocked any effort to bring up a bill and fix it. The American people might find that hard to believe, but I will repeat it: Since that time there have been numerous efforts on behalf of Members from this side to call up amendments and call up legislation to alter, amend, and replace the ObamaCare legislation.

He has utilized parliamentarian maneuvers, filling the tree, to block that. It cannot continue. This is about to become a law. It is going to hammer the American economy. It is already hammering the economy. The American people don't want it, and we are not going to go silent. So this is the beginning of the fight.

Senator CRUZ—maybe people can disagree with his tactics—but he drove and raised the issue. We need to keep talking about it; we just do. It is time for this Congress to listen to the voice of the American people.

Senator BOXER is a good person, and she said President Bush had \$1 trillion deficits and President Obama has reduced them in half. The highest deficit President Bush ever had in the 8 years he served as President was \$487 billion, which is a lot of money—too much. The year before, it was \$168 billion.

When President Obama took office, what was the first thing that was passed within weeks? A \$1 trillion stimulus bill to supposedly stimulate the economy, but the money went out to government agencies and departments, and it had no stimulus impact at all. It was \$1 trillion—every penny of which was borrowed. That year the deficit went up well over \$1 trillion. The next year it was well over \$1 trillion, the next year well over \$1 trillion, and the next year well over \$1 trillion.

In the first 4 years of President Obama's leadership, we had the highest deficits ever recorded in America. It is a stunning event, and he fought every day—and there were fights on the floor—to spend more and borrow more.

Some of his advisers would say: The reason this economy isn't growing so well is because we didn't borrow and spend enough. We didn't have enough. We should have created more debt and should have spent more. It has resulted

to this date in the lowest rebound economically from a recession since World War II, and we are not doing well in that regard.

It is absolutely not so that President Obama bears no responsibility for the unprecedented debt that he has run up during this time. He is still advocating for \$1 trillion more in spending above the Budget Control Act levels that he agreed to in the summer of 2011. He wants to spend \$1 trillion more than what he signed as an agreement to raise the debt ceiling.

I know he didn't want to, but Congress said: We are going to cut back on your credit card. Now we are going to raise the debt ceiling \$2 trillion, as you said you need, but we demand that you reduce the growth of spending over 10 years by \$2 trillion.

We were projected to have spending growth to \$10 trillion over the current rate of spending, which is about \$3.6 trillion a year. We were going to increase it by a total of \$10 trillion. Under BCA, if we adhere to it, we would increase it by \$8 trillion, not \$10 trillion. That is not going to bankrupt America. There is no reason we can't run this government by growing the spending by \$8 trillion instead of \$10 trillion. So it is unbelievable that we make that point.

I know the budget balanced in the last years of the 1990s, and President Clinton proudly claims credit for that, and he was a part of it. But I haven't forgotten that the Republican House was in a constant battle over Democratic President Clinton's spending levels, and there was actually a fairly long shutdown of the government to contain the growth of spending, and it resulted in a balanced budget. That is how it happened. There was credit enough to go to both sides of that.

We need health care reform. It needs to be smartly and effectively done. We can improve health care in our country, but it does not have to tank the American economy, and that is what has been happening in recent days. I was going to talk about that, without much reference to ObamaCare and the health care bill—which is a negative factor of economic growth of very large proportions—but I just followed my friend and able colleague, Senator BOXER, and I wanted to share those points.

Last Thursday I delivered the first in a series of speeches looking at the state of our economy. I directed my staff on the Budget Committee—I am the ranking Republican there—to specifically analyze conditions facing working Americans so I could share those findings directly with the Members of the Senate. Both parties need to focus their efforts on defending working Americans from policies—Washington policies too often—that damage their financial well-being. It is happening. Last week I discussed the falling incomes and social challenges eroding the security of the middle class.

Today I will focus on the jobless recovery and the general problem of unemployment.

Few things matter more to a working family than the pace of the economy, especially after a hard recession. If on the one hand, it is a rapid, strong recovery, jobs will return quickly, people will return to the workforce, and a great deal of social suffering will be averted.

If, on the other hand, it is a slow recovery, then businesses don't create many new jobs, wages stagnate or fall, as they have been doing, and families continue to borrow from their savings to pay their bills. Life is spent wondering and worrying about the future.

We live today in the slowest economic recovery—they called it an economic recovery—since the end of World War II. No recovery from a recession since the end of World War II has been as slow as this one. Not counting the Great Recession, we have had 11 recessions since 1945. All had faster, stronger recoveries than this one—with all of them we bounced back quicker.

How slow is this economic recovery? Well, it has been nearly 6 years since the recession began in December of 2007. We still have not returned to the number of jobs we had 6 years ago. We haven't come back to the number of people working that we had 6 years ago. We are 1,988,000 jobs—almost 2 million—short of the 146,273,000 jobs we had when the recession began. This is not good.

Let's compare that with the other two bad postwar recessions: the contractions of 1973 through 1975 and 1981 and 1982—serious recessions. The recession of 1973 lasted 16 months. The recession of the 1981 collapse lasted 16 months, and the recession of 2007 lasted until June of 2009, or 18 months.

Working people were hit hard by these two earlier recessions. The unemployment rate rose to 9 percent in 1975 and 10.8 percent in 1982. The highest monthly unemployment rate for the Great Recession of 2007 to 2009 was 10 percent. Our unemployment rate didn't hit as high as 1982. There is not much difference in the severity and length of these recessions. They were pretty similar.

Even so, total jobs had recovered by 25 months after the start of the 1973 recession and by 28 months after the recovery from the 1981 recession. It has been 70 months, however, since the start of the 2007 recession, and employment has not yet recovered.

Lost hours of work is another and even better way to gauge the failure of the current recovery. It is not simply the number of jobs in the economy but the number of hours worked that strongly influences the pace of economic activity.

In the fourth quarter of 2007, just as the recession was starting, Americans worked about 236 billion hours—that is a lot of hours. We still have not returned to that level.

In the third quarter of 2013, this last quarter, the Labor Department esti-

mated Americans still only worked 232 billion hours. That is a shortfall of 3.5 billion hours. This decline is greater per worker since the population of available workers has increased by 9 million. So we have got 9 million more workers and a decline in the number of hours worked, and it is still well below what the number was in 2007. This is not the kind of recovery we need to be looking for.

Still another way to show the slowness of this recovery is to measure how much higher GDP—the economy today—is compared to the start of the recession. It turns out that economic output is 4.4 percent higher. Compare this with the 1973 and 1981 recessions. By this time after the 1973 recession, GDP was 17.9 percent higher, and GDP after the 1981 recession by this time was 20 percent higher. That is, the economy was 20 percent bigger by this time after the 1981 recovery.

Our current economy is only 4.4 percent larger. The 1981 economic gains were five times as great as this.

These are the top line numbers. What do they mean to real people? Below this surface we find extensive economic suffering throughout our Nation. There are 25 percent more discouraged workers today—988,000 versus 793,000—than there were in June of 2009 when the recession ended. We had 366,000 discouraged workers when the recession started in 2007, which means we have had an increase of 172 percent in this sad number in 6 years.

One of the most stunning developments of this recovery has been the decline in the labor force participation rate. This is a fundamental indicator of the breadth and depth of a recovery and of economic growth. Today 58.7 percent of the noninstitutionalized population 16 years of age and older is working—58.7 percent today. In 2007 that number stood at 62.7 percent. The current rate of labor force participation is the lowest this Nation has seen since 1978. The percentage of the population working today in the age group of workers is the lowest it has been since 1978, and it is not getting better.

This decline is due to two factors: increased unemployment, and labor force dropouts—discouraged people who are no longer even looking for work.

How many people are we talking about? If the same percentage of the population was working today as was working in 2007, we would have 154,089,000 workers. Since we currently only have 144,285,000 million people working, it appears that 9,804,000 people are out of the labor force—9 million normally expected to be working are out of the labor force.

When they are out of the labor force, it does not show up in the unemployment rate. It is only people who are actually applying for jobs who show up in the unemployment rate. So the unemployment rate we see today hides the real depth of the unemployment problem we have in America.

Of the 5.7 million who totally dropped out, more retirements and

more disability than in 2007 explain about two-thirds of those dropouts. People went on disability, went on retirement. Many of them went on retirement at 62 when it would have been better if they could have had a decent job opportunity to work to 65, 66, 70, but they have dropped out because they are older workers, perhaps, and were unable to find decent work. But it cannot be good for America for millions of people to take their Social Security at 62 rather than later, too often because no work is available.

More than 4 million unemployed Americans have been out of work for more than 27 weeks—4 million—more than half the year they have been unemployed. All told, 11.5 million Americans want to work but cannot find jobs.

The unemployment rate for those between the ages of 16 and 19 who are not in school or in the military or in prison stands at 24 percent. So teenagers have a very large number, and the number is much higher for minority teenagers and young men particularly. This is the highest teenage unemployment has ever been this far into a recovery. It is very dangerous for our society to have so many young people—especially young men whose unemployment rates are even higher than females—out of work. This is not good for America.

We need to have a growing economy that creates jobs, and we don't need to be bringing in—under the immigration bill that passed the Senate, we don't need to be bringing in twice the number of low-skilled workers as we have been doing, as we have a generous immigration policy. This bill would double the number of guest workers coming into America to take jobs that children need to be doing. They need to be working. We don't need teenagers and young people—19, 20, 22, 23—with nothing to do month after month, year after year.

At 13 percent, unemployment among African Americans is about twice the national average of 7.4 percent. Unemployment among Hispanics stands at 9.4 percent. Unemployment among those with less than a high school education is 11 percent. But we want to bring in millions of people without high school educations to compete for the few jobs that are out there.

Again, these statistics, as bad as they are, mask the real-life implications of the slow economy. These are young careers that have failed to launch when they should, marriages perhaps put off until the economy improves, families not started until couples can afford children—a generation of children that arrive out of wedlock. We have retirements taken too early, loss of homes, perhaps; older children at home who should be out on their own, and we would normally expect them to be working; and lots of part-time, extra jobs at lower pay just to make ends meet.

Indeed, one of the most devastating statistics is the growth in part-time work instead of full-time work. It is a

stunning number. We have 5,188,000 fewer full-time jobs today than in December of 2007—5 million fewer. That equals a decrease in full-time employment of 4.3 percent, even though our population is growing.

At the same time, part-time employment has grown by 3 million over this same time period. That is an increase in part-time jobs of 13 percent. So make no mistake, the total number of jobs since 2007 is down, and for the people who are finding work, the work they find too often can only be part time.

Now 77 percent of the people who got a job since January of this year got a part-time job, not a full time job. When we see, colleagues, the reports of 190,000 jobs, 200,000 jobs, remember, 77 percent of those are part-time jobs. Those numbers hide the reality of the danger in our workforce.

Nearly 90 percent of the increase in part-time work represents people who, according to the Labor Department, "could only find part-time work." In other words, they would like full-time but could only find part-time work. At the end of 2007, this number stood at 1.2 million. However, the most recent data shows that this population has grown by 127 percent to 2,714,000—a 127-percent increase in this number.

Job growth in the economy since 2007 has been principally in part-time work. We are becoming a part-time economy.

The President's health care law, without any doubt—I don't believe any economist, even if they try to sugarcoat it the best they could, would deny that the President's health care law is playing a major factor from the shift from full-time work to part-time work. As we all know, part-time workers don't enjoy the same health, retirement, vacation, and other benefits as full-time workers do. It is exceedingly hard indeed to succeed in this economy and in a career with only a part-time job.

We must recognize one of the biggest contributors to the decline in full-time jobs is the health care bill we have been debating. As others have observed, it is destroying the 40-hour workweek. That is what a union leader said: It is destroying the 40-hour workweek. It is even an assault on workers.

Let me tell my colleagues about one constituent who wrote my office. Linda Askew, from Sheffield, AL, wrote in July, asking Congress to do something to help. Ms. Askew has a small neighborhood business. She employs less than 10 people. According to Ms. Askew:

We have been here for almost 50 years. We have tried to help our employees have health care for over 10 years now . . . The new premiums are \$590 per month for single coverage and \$1,520 for family coverage. . . . These costs are almost becoming unbearable for our company. More troubling than that, in the letter—

she got a letter from her insurance company—

was that part of the reason for this increase was blamed on a new health care reform fees

and taxes that health insurers must pay on behalf of all their groups . . .

So to reduce the cost of health care in America, the health care bill raised taxes on the insurance companies that provide it. It gets passed along.

She continues:

Small businesses cannot keep up with these increases.

In the coming days, as I document the conditions facing American workers, I will also address the many causes of this economic deterioration—and there are many. There are many causes for the deterioration in the economy. Republicans and Democrats need to heed these problems I have stated, including a decline in wages, beginning in 1999 through a different administration.

The question is, What are we going to do about it, Republicans and Democrats? We need to consider these issues and deal with them.

What we are seeing is immensely troubling. As Washington grows larger, Washington grows wealthier and more powerful, American workers are being impoverished, sidelined, and marginalized. We see the numbers showing that the only area of America that has been showing raised growth is Washington. Washington! The government class is being enriched at the expense of the middle class. From deficit spending to Federal regulation to the immigration bill, Washington is pursuing policies that benefit lobbyists, the well-connected, government employees, regulators, and bureaucrats, but that are reducing the wages and job opportunities for everyday American workers. The numbers are clear.

Both parties need to shut out the special interests, work to develop policies that will restore our history of dynamic economic growth—and we can do so—growth that benefits all the people of our Nation.

What is the response we get from the governing class? What do they tell us the problem is? On the deficit, what do they say the problem is? We haven't spent enough money. It is your problem, American people. Just send us more money and we won't have deficits anymore. Trust us. Send us more money. The President proposed a \$1 trillion tax increase in his budget. It was rejected, but that is what he proposed and that is what he advocates for. So they want to spend more.

They believe they can invest. We give the government more money, and it is going to invest in the economy and everybody is going to be better off. But we have seen that movie. It has been going on for 5 years, to a degree unprecedented in the history of America. They say, Don't worry, borrow and spend. Don't worry about the debt. We can just borrow more and spend more and that will stimulate the economy.

They say we need to regulate more. We need to block more American energy and import more, I suppose, from Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, and that is going to improve our economy. Really?

We are going to drive up the cost of energy and coal and that is going to improve jobs in America? That is going to help a working person who now has to pay \$200, \$250 a month for his gas bill to commute? That is supposed to be good for us?

All we have heard is more taxes, more regulation, more government, more debt. That is the policy we are seeing here. I haven't seen anything that has the power to produce the growth and prosperity that we need.

So I say we have to get over this. We have tried this. It is not working. These policies have made it worse. We have to get back to classical American policies that validate individual responsibility, that allow people to progress and make more, that don't drive us to import more oil, that don't put regulation by massive numbers all over the economy, driving down productivity and driving up costs. That is the kind of thing we need to be doing. If we will do that, and if we will allow the vitality of the American spirit to flourish and flower and get this burden off the backs of our people, I think we will be surprised how much better things can be.

It is a serious crisis. This trend has been going on far too long. We can't ignore it. We can't say it is just the recession. We have been going along like this since 2007. We have not seen the growth we need. The tax and spend and borrow policies haven't worked. It is time for us to confront that. I hope my colleagues will.

I will continue to examine the data we are seeing out there and share it with my colleagues and maybe we can surprise ourselves how much good we can do in the long run.

Thank you, Madam President. I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

THE DEBT CEILING

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I thank the Chair for recognizing me and allowing me to follow the Senator from Alabama whose remarks I agree with.

I am disappointed in what happened this week. Those of us in the minority learned another lesson for the minority, is to get to a bill we wanted to get to, the majority then has the votes to amend that bill unless some of the majority would happen to side with us. And they did amend the bill in ways that I didn't agree with, taking the provisions out that would have defunded the move toward the health care plan that I think we are going to see more and more of the country isn't ready for. But the bill did go back to the House. The bill was changed from the bill the House sent over.

So the bill went back to the House, and they have a chance to see what else they might be able to do—hopefully, in the next few days. But between now and the end of the fiscal year—which is Monday, by the way—