

I have gone through a litany of times when we have done it. I have also talked about the fact that this year we have a bigger debt than ever, a bigger deficit than any of those historical examples I gave. Therefore, there is a greater need than ever for us to come together and find that common ground.

Mr. WICKER. If the Senator would yield for a moment. I think the distinguished majority leader is going to make a procedural motion which will take only a moment, and then I have a question for my distinguished friend from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. I will be happy to yield.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the period for morning business be extended until 5 p.m., and that all the provisions under the previous order remain in effect.

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

Mr. REID. Madam President, I appreciate my two friends for yielding for this consent agreement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, as far as I am concerned, my distinguished friend from Ohio can still have the floor. I only wanted to take a moment to congratulate him on his remarks and to observe that when it comes to budget matters, he knows whereof he speaks. He not only has a distinguished record in the House of Representatives, but he is a leader in being a budget hawk and was an opponent of additional debt in the House of Representatives, and has had a distinguished career in the Office of Management and Budget. So I thank the distinguished Senator.

It may be that he has already asked for an opinion piece from today's Wall Street Journal to be printed in the RECORD.

Mr. PORTMAN. I have not.

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD at this time an opinion piece written by Kevin Hassett and Abby McCloskey on page 23 in today's Wall Street Journal entitled "Obama Rewrites Debt-Limit History."

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Wall Street Journal, Oct. 3, 2013]

OBAMA REWRITES DEBT-LIMIT HISTORY (By Kevin Hassett and Abby McCloskey)

As the government shutdown continues, the nation gets closer and closer to the day—probably Oct. 17—when Washington hits the debt limit, and with it the specter of default. President Obama may be getting nervous about what will happen to his negotiating position as that day approaches.

He keeps asserting that the debt limit has never been used "to extort a president or a government party." Treasury Secretary Jack Lew is selling the same story, saying

"until very recently, Congress typically raised the debt ceiling on a routine basis . . . the threat of default was not a bargaining chip in the negotiations."

This is simply untrue. Consider the shenanigans of congressional Democrats in 1989 over Medicare's catastrophic health coverage provision.

In this case, the problem was political infighting within the Democratic Party between the House and the Senate. "Weeks of political maneuvering brought the government to the brink of financial default," the New York Times wrote on Nov. 8 of that year. The debt limit was raised just hours before all extraordinary measures to avoid default were exhausted. The final bill dropped any action on Medicare but included a measure to repeal 1986 tax rules barring discrimination in employer-paid health insurance plans.

The Obama administration's campaign to make the debt limit appear non-negotiable might reflect concern that Republican congressional strategy might actually work. Six out of 10 Americans say "it is right to require spending cuts when the debt ceiling is raised, even if it risks default," according to a Sept. 26 Bloomberg poll. (Only 28% say "the debt ceiling should be raised when necessary, with no conditions.")

One thing is certain: The debt limit has been a powerful negotiating tool in the last several decades. It has enabled the passage of important additional legislation.

According to the Congressional Research Service, Congress voted 53 times from 1978 to 2013 to change the debt ceiling. The debt ceiling has increased to about \$16 trillion from \$752 billion. Of these 53 votes, 29 occurred in a Congress run by Democrats, 17 in a split Congress, and seven in a Republican-controlled Congress.

While large increases that give the U.S. Treasury a healthy amount of borrowing space happen occasionally, small short-term increases are common. In 1990 alone, while Republican George H.W. Bush was in the White House, a Democratic-controlled Congress voted to increase the debt limit seven times.

Congressional Republicans who want legislative conditions in exchange for a debt-limit increase are following a strategy that has been pursued by both parties the majority of the time. Of the 53 increases in the debt limit, 26 were "clean"—that is, stand-alone, no strings-attached statutes. The remaining debt-limit increases were part of an omnibus package of other legislative bills or a continuing resolution. Other times, the limit was paired with reforms, only some of which were related to the budget.

In 1979, a Democratic Congress increased the debt limit but required Congress and the president to present balanced budgets for fiscal years 1981 and 1982. In 1980 the debt limit, again increased by a Democratic Congress, included repeal of an oil-import fee. In 1985, the debt limit that was raised by a divided Congress included a cigarette tax and a provision requiring Congress to pursue an alternative minimum corporate tax in the next year.

Most recently, a divided Congress that passed the 2011 debt-limit increase included the Budget Control Act which aimed to reduce the deficit by \$2.4 trillion over 10 years and included the automatic budget sequester that kicked in on Jan. 1.

As the finger pointing begins, it is important to keep this history in mind. All told, congressional Democrats have been responsible for 60% of the "dirty" increases when the debt limit was raised alongside other legislative items. Republicans were responsible for 15%. The remaining 25% occurred during divided Congresses.

Of the Democratic dirties, six occurred when Democrats also controlled the White House, and 10 occurred when a Republican controlled the White House. For Republicans, all four occurred while a Democrat held the presidency.

Debt-limit votes often have been contentious, but on the whole they serve an important function. First, they force painful votes by legislators who would prefer to offer supporters free lunches through unfunded spending programs. Without these votes, politicians of both parties would have a significantly easier time ignoring fiscal discipline.

Second, debt-limit votes have provided a regular vehicle for legislation. Divided governments have a difficult time passing anything. Since the consequences of government default are so severe, debt-limit legislation has always passed in the end, and it has often included important additional legislative accomplishments.

Third, the debt limit has provided significant leverage to the minority party and has been a check on the power of the presidency.

Republicans today are playing a role that has been played many times. While the debt-limit kabuki inevitably roils markets as deadlines approach, the alternative absence of fiscal discipline would make government insolvency more probable in the fullness of time.

Trying to separate ObamaCare from the debt limit, President Obama has asserted that his health law has "nothing to do with the budget." His argument is eagerly echoed by an at-best ignorant media. The Affordable Care Act was passed under "reconciliation"—a legislative process that is used only for budget measures and which limits congressional debate.

The notion that legislation passed as part of a budget might be reconsidered as part of subsequent budget legislation should be uncontroversial. Perhaps that is why the administration has staked so much on its misrepresentation of history.

Mr. WICKER. I thank the Presiding Officer.

This article points out in a very detailed and annotated way a number of times when this Congress has made policy changes, important, far-reaching policy changes, in connection with negotiations on the debt ceiling increase.

So I join my friend from Ohio in saying it is absolutely incumbent on this Senate—Republicans and our friends on the Democratic side of the aisle—as well as Members of the House of Representatives and the President of the United States, our Commander in Chief, to, once again, negotiate in good faith.

The President may feel we are entirely unreasonable in our position. Frankly, there have been times during my 19 years in the House and now in the Senate when I felt the Chief Executive was completely wrong in his viewpoint on how we should address our national debt. But at no time in my recollection have the parties been simply unwilling to sit down and talk at all or to have meetings in the White House and in those meetings to basically say we are not going to make counterproposals or to say publicly: Why should I offer them anything at all? I think the American people see that is an unworkable approach.

So I point out to my colleagues, and I thank the Senator from Ohio in

pointing out that very important fiscal decisions, very important debt-related decisions have absolutely been made in our Nation's history, and I am glad they have been made in connection with this debate on the national debt.

I yield back to my friend from Ohio and thank him for allowing me to intrude on his time.

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, if the Senator will hold for a moment, first, I thank the Senator for referring to the op-ed in the Wall Street Journal. I have not seen it yet so I look forward to reading it myself. It sounds as though it is consistent with what I was pointing out, which is it would only make sense that the American people would want us to reduce spending when we extend the debt limit yet again—again, at historic levels now. The American people get it. They know we can't keep spending more than we take in, so they expect us to do something about the underlying problem.

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, the Senator from Ohio mentioned the Budget Control Act of 2011. It wasn't a particularly pretty way to do debt reduction, but it did give us the spending levels we are operating under now.

The authors of this opinion piece go on to point out that according to the Congressional Research Service—an independent arm of this government—Congress voted 53 times from 1978 to 2013 to change the debt ceiling. The debt ceiling has increased to about \$16 trillion. In at least 53 votes, 29 occurred in a Congress run by Democrats, 17 in split Congresses, and 7 in Republican-controlled Congresses. It goes on to point out time and again how important policy changes were made in connection with this debate.

So I thank my friend for yielding.

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I wish to ask my friend from Mississippi a question. He has been stalwart on budget debates and he is a guy who has always held the line, in the House and in the Senate. He voted for the Budget Control Act because he believes we need to get our spending under control. He also wants to ensure that we deal with the part of the budget that is not being talked about because the whole continuing resolution debate is about 35 percent of the budget. The other 65 percent, which is the faster growing part, based on the Congressional Budget Office, parts of that—the health care entitlements—will grow over 100 percent over the next 10 years. I ask the Senator from Mississippi if he is hearing back home what I am hearing from my constituents, which is they want us to do something on the spending before we extend the credit card limit again.

I wonder if he could tell us what he is hearing back home, given his background.

Mr. WICKER. The distinguished Senator from Ohio is absolutely correct. As a matter of fact, the American people are alarmed, actually, at the level of debt this government has run up, particularly in the last 4½ to 5 years.

It has been astounding. We cannot continue to add debt upon debt for the next generation, many of whom are within the sound of our voices and some of whom are employed as our pages. The Senator has already referred to them today. We owe them a government that grows our debt at a much slower rate.

We have done it before. When the distinguished Senator and I were in the House of Representatives, we were told we could not balance the budget within 10 years. Actually, with the leadership of my friend from Ohio, we passed legislation. We had the cooperation of the President of the United States who negotiated with us, and that divided government balanced the budget not within 10 years but within 3 or 4 years, and we fulfilled that until the terrorist attacks of 2001.

So, yes, the American people are concerned. I think we would be doing a disservice to them, simply to go along with a debt increase without addressing the underlying problems. As my friend from Ohio knows, the President of the United States himself in this budget has proposed very significant changes in the growth rate of certain of our entitlement programs, which would go a long way toward getting us to a bipartisan resolution on this issue.

Mr. PORTMAN. The Senator raises an important point, which is that the larger part of the budget—the 65 percent of the budget that is not being debated as part of a continuing resolution, not subject to congressional appropriations and the faster growing part of the budget—is an issue the President actually did address in his own budget. In fact, he laid out a number of proposals called mandatory spending reforms that would help to reduce some of the debt by reducing some of the cost increases on that 65 percent of the budget.

By the way, 65 percent today, 10 years from now will be 76 percent of the budget. The departments and agencies that are appropriated every year are only 35 percent, soon to be reduced to 24 percent of the budget. So that is a very good point the Senator makes.

The President himself has pointed out that we need to make changes. Yet he refuses to negotiate, refuses to talk, refuses to consider any of these proposals. It doesn't seem to make sense, and it is certainly not in the interests of the American people, the people from Mississippi and the people from Ohio.

I thank my colleague from Mississippi for joining me. I look forward to reading the new material he has provided for the RECORD today. I thank him for his leadership.

I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, as my colleagues have done on several occasions, I come to the floor also to speak on the shutdown and the pending effort to find a compromise we can finally get to the President of the United States. Today, specifically, I come to the floor to take issue with a remark made by the President on Tuesday this week regarding the health care reform bill that he also sometimes calls ObamaCare. He said:

The Affordable Care Act is a law that passed the House, that passed the Senate, the Supreme Court ruled constitutional. It was a central issue in last year's election. It is settled, and it is here to stay.

While I understand the President's position on the law that now is referred to by his name, he also misses the point. On Monday night, the Senate had the opportunity to keep the government running. The Senate had a bill that funded the government and did so without delaying or defunding ObamaCare. As we all know, the Senate voted down that bill. So let me repeat: The government could have been kept open without delaying or defunding ObamaCare. Anyone who says anything different is simply not being accurate.

What did the bill Monday night seek to do? The bill sought to delay the implementation of the individual mandate for 1 year and require executive branch appointees to go to the exchanges. Those are changes to ObamaCare.

Apparently, the President doesn't believe we are allowed to make any changes whatsoever to ObamaCare. I would respect that position if the President actually enforced it over the last several years, as he had bills presented to him that he signed and that actually made some changes in the health care reform law. In fact, Congress has made numerous changes to ObamaCare since it was signed into law. I have a list here, but it is a list I will read in its entirety so people know the President has accepted changes to his prime piece of legislation and so I can refute that the President isn't consistent when I go back now to his quotation when he says:

The Affordable Care Act is a law that passed the House, that passed the Senate, the Supreme Court ruled constitutional. It was a central issue in last year's election. It is settled, and it is here to stay.

By that, I think the President is signifying that we can't do anything to touch the issue whatsoever, even to the minimal extent that we tried to Monday night.

So this list was conveniently assembled not by this Senator but by the Congressional Research Service, and it was done on behalf of Senator COBURN.