

attached. Republicans and Democrats may have our differences, but neither side should hold the full faith and credit of the United States hostage while we resolve them.

Let's reopen the government. Speaker BOEHNER could end this government shutdown today, an hour from now, by letting the House—the entire House—vote on the Senate's clean bill and reopen the government. When the Speaker is on national TV and other places saying: We don't have the votes, he will never know that because he won't let the measure come to the floor. Of course it has enough votes.

Let's reopen the government and pay our bills. There is no reason for Republicans to drag out this process and force the Nation's economy ever closer to an economically catastrophic default. Then let's negotiate. Two hundred days ago to the day, Senate Democrats passed a budget, led by Senator MURRAY, that reflects our priorities. Since then we have asked 20 times to negotiate a compromise within our budget and the one passed by Republicans in the House. We are not afraid to negotiate, but we need someone to negotiate with. We need a dancing partner. If Republicans end this irresponsible, as it appears now, government shutdown, remove the threat of a cataclysmic default, and stop objecting to a budget conference, we could start negotiating now.

Republicans have already been so harsh on rhetoric. Republicans have already done enough harm to our economy with a reckless shutdown designed to undermine the law of the land, ObamaCare. But the consequences of a first-in-history default on the debt would be far worse—even worse than the 2008 financial crisis from which we are still recovering. Two years ago, the last time the Republicans flirted with this terrible idea, America's credit rating was downgraded for the first time in the history of our great country. The stock market dropped 2,000 points. It has already dropped 7 or 8 percent over the last few weeks.

Raising the debt limit doesn't cost taxpayers a single dime, and Republicans shouldn't claim it does because it doesn't. That is certainly not what they claimed when George W. Bush raised the debt ceiling seven times. Congress has raised the debt limit more than 90 times since it was created in 1939, the majority of those times with Republican Presidents. Ronald Reagan asked Congress to raise the limit 18 times—twice as many as any other President. He, being the great orator he was, said that to do what is being done now, to use an example of why someone should never do that, he called it “outrageous.”

Raising the debt ceiling simply allows payment of bills we have already incurred—bills for wars and tax breaks paid for with borrowed money—and basically the simple operation of our government.

I heard one Republican Senator today—I read about it—he said: Well,

we have enough money coming in to pay the interest.

Social Security payments would not go forward, and that is only the beginning.

To even consider defaulting on these obligations or to use the threat of default to extract concessions is terribly irresponsible in a negative fashion.

Republican Governor Jon Huntsman, Governor of Utah, an extremely liberal State, said this about the current Republican brinkmanship over default:

It's pretty sad, pretty pathetic for the greatest economy on Earth to be experiencing this . . . Russian roulette with our . . . economy.

He continued:

We have to see it as an economic issue. . . . If you think the government shutdown is a big deal, that's a hand grenade compared to a thermonuclear weapon that would be hitting the debt ceiling.

Yesterday the minority leader suggested that the only way to disarm this weapon is for me to engage in one-on-one talks with the Speaker of the House. I am happy to talk to JOHN BOEHNER anytime. We have talked. But it is obvious to me that no amount of talking will make Speaker BOEHNER either willing or able to end this shutdown and prevent a catastrophic default.

In fact, as my friend the senior Senator from Arizona said yesterday, it is time for the Senate to deal and to lead. He is right. We have an issue coming before us momentarily—the debt ceiling. We have to be the Senate, lead, get that passed, and send it over to the House of Representatives. We have already passed a bill to reopen the government. We have already done that. We are going to go a step further. Senate Democrats have introduced legislation to avert a default on this Nation's obligations.

I say to my Republican colleagues in the Senate, the time for misleading rhetoric is through, and the time for responsible leadership is here. We are happy to work with our Republican colleagues, open the government, pay our bills, and negotiate anything—anything they wish to talk about.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

Mr. REID. Would the Chair announce the business of the day.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for debate only until 2 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The assistant majority leader.

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. DURBIN. Each morning, the Senate opens with the customary prayer

by our Chaplain and the Pledge of Allegiance. This is an opportunity for Members of the Senate to reflect on two important things: first, our mission on Earth not only as elected officials but as human beings and, second, our devotion and loyalty to this great country.

I have listened to most of the prayers that have been offered over the past 9 days of the government shutdown by Dr. Barry Black. He is a retired admiral from the U.S. Navy and came again before us this morning to offer a prayer. This prayer had a very important message. It was short and direct. He talked about this government shutdown. He reflected on the fact that we literally have families who in the last few days had that awful knock on the door where they were told their son or daughter had died in service to his country in the U.S. military. There were 5 over the weekend and I understand 17 over the course of this government shutdown.

Sadly, the support we always give to these families is not there. It is not there. Customarily, within 24 to 36 hours they are given a sum of money in advance on the benefits that soldier earned so they can take care of funeral expenses and the obvious needs of their family. We can't do that because the government is shut down. That awful knock on the door was not followed by the consolation of this government helping these families. We offered to many of these families an opportunity to come and to be there to welcome, at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, the return of their fallen hero. We can't offer them that benefit because the government is shut down.

Dr. Black said to all of us this morning, all of those who believe a government shutdown is just another political gambit—what he said, we should remember, and his words were direct and simple: Enough is enough. Enough is enough.

It isn't only a matter of these families losing that loving son, daughter, husband, wife, brother, or sister; it is a matter that our government that asked them to risk their lives for this great Nation will not stand by them in this moment of grief.

Yesterday, the junior Senator from Texas came in and said: Oh, I think we have already voted to take care of that. It is not true. What is happening now is the House of Representatives—the House of Representatives, which refuses to reopen the government—is scurrying to pass a little bill that will take care of these families. Let's get that bill in, they said. We don't want to face the embarrassment of another headline like this.

That isn't enough. It isn't nearly enough because the embarrassment of this government shutdown goes beyond this grievous situation with these bereaving families. It goes to so many different levels.

Think about this for a moment: In the United States of America, when it

comes to infant formula for babies, 60 percent of the infant formula is sold through one government program called WIC—Women, Infants, and Children Program. It is a program that brings in pregnant mothers and moms with new babies and does its level best to make sure those babies are healthy and off to a good start in life.

In my State of Illinois, in the largest county, Cook County, 50,000 mothers depend on WIC—the WIC Program that provides the basics for healthy moms and healthy babies. The WIC Program runs out of money this month. When it does, the support for these families, for these moms, and for these babies is in danger.

Why are we doing this? Is this part of the Republican strategy—sick babies, mothers unprepared to deliver? Is that part of their strategy? Is that their leverage for what they want to achieve? If it is, I have three words for them: Enough is enough.

I just left my office where I had a group of people from my State visiting for whom I have a special affection. They are with what is known as the Primary Health Care Association, and I will bet the Chair has a similar association of some type in her State of North Dakota. These are the folks who open the clinics in the neighborhoods and small towns so that people who aren't wealthy have access to a doctor and a nurse. I love them, I just love them to pieces because they have invested their whole lives in helping folks who are often ignored. They told me that despite the sadness they feel, and even the anger over this government shutdown, there is a feeling of elation now that the insurance exchanges are open under the Affordable Care Act. They say people are coming in and saying: You won't believe it, but I qualify for health insurance for the first time in my life. These are the clients, these are the people they help every day, and now these people have the peace of mind of health insurance.

That drives some on the other side crazy—to think ObamaCare will go forward and provide this kind of help. In my State, over 250,000 people have already visited the Web sites. They are signing up now for health insurance, many of them for the first time. Ours isn't the most successful State. It appears that per capita the State of Kentucky is one of the most successful, with some 10,000 people already signing up for health insurance—health insurance they otherwise can't afford or don't have.

This is part of the debate in Washington. The Republicans, many of them, are arguing we have to shut down the government, we have to shut down ObamaCare, we have to stop these people from signing up for health insurance. It is not going to work. They cannot reverse history. This is a law that has been on the books almost 4 years, enacted by Congress, signed by the President, judged constitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court—a law on

which we have had a referendum in a Presidential election. When President Obama stood up and said: I am going to fight for affordable health care and health care reform, and the Republican candidate said: I will abolish it, President Obama won that reelection by 5 million votes. That is the verdict of history. That is the judgment of the American people. That is how we guide a democracy.

There are some very wealthy, very extreme who will never accept the results of an election. They think with enough money they can overcome the voice of democracy. They are wrong, and that is why what we are setting about to do here is to reopen this government, pay our debts, and then work out whatever remains in terms of issues.

I ask my staff each morning to give me a list of what is happening because of this government shutdown. I can't keep up with it—I mean, page after page, issue after issue. Here is one. There is a major salmonella outbreak affecting hundreds of people in many States right now. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service has announced an estimated 278 people across 18 States, mostly in California, have been reported ill. They are working with the Centers for Disease Control, along with State and local officials, to track that. But that said, we have to understand that with a government shutdown these agencies are not fully staffed.

Families and children across America are vulnerable because of this Republican shutdown strategy. For some, it will mean an illness they will get over in a few days. For others, it could be more serious. The words of the chaplain ring in my ears: Enough is enough.

We keep hearing about this piecemeal approach of the House of Representatives, where when they see these ghastly headlines of bereaving families who are denied the basic benefits that we offer families of those who have fallen in service to America—when they face that embarrassment—they quickly manufacture a little spending bill to cover it, saying: Oh, we will take care of that one. Chuck E. Cheese's calls it whack-a-mole. And that is what they are doing. Each time a story pops up, they try to knock it back down.

The Center for American Progress has done a review of the 14 bills passed by the House. They find approximately \$83 billion in funding—just about \$6 billion a bill. The total amount of non-defense funding in the original House-passed continuing resolution was \$469 billion. Therefore, the House bills that already have passed and are currently under consideration make up less than 18 percent of the total. So for all the efforts of the House of Representatives, sending over these bills to react to embarrassments from their government shutdown, they can't keep up with it.

The simple honest answer is to open the government. We have passed the

bill and sent it to Speaker BOEHNER. He is living in political fear of calling that bill because he knows it will pass. The Democrats overwhelmingly will support it, and enough moderate Republicans will step up to reopen this government, and Speaker BOEHNER cannot accept that reality. He is afraid to call a vote.

How many more embarrassing moments will we have, reporting on situations such as these poor families who have given their all, who have lost their loved ones, and now they are asked to suffer because of the Republican shutdown? It has to come to an end.

Yesterday on the floor I appealed to moderate Republicans in the Senate to step up—step up and join us. We are going to have a bill before us in a short time—I hope sooner rather than later—that is going to avoid a default on America's debt. If we default on October 17, it will be the first time in the history of the United States that will have occurred. It will have a devastating impact on businesses, on jobs, and on the savings of Americans.

If you have a savings account, if you have a retirement account, have you been watching it over the last several days? Have you seen what the Republican shutdown has done for your plans, for your future and your family? This is unacceptable, and it will get dramatically worse unless we pass, in a bipartisan fashion, this extension of the debt limit for the United States of America. This will be a chance for moderate Republicans in the Senate to speak up and stand up.

Before I close, I want to say a special word about my colleague, my Republican Senate colleague MARK KIRK, who announced this week he would vote for a clean debt ceiling. I have said it back home, and I will say it here on the floor. It is the right thing to do for my colleague. It is the right thing to do for America. But I want to express my appreciation for his leadership. I hope his example of stepping up and saying he is going to put the country first before his party is one that will be followed by other Members on his side of the aisle.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming.

HEALTH CARE EXCHANGES

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I appreciate the comments of my colleague from Illinois, and I have heard him make reference to the insurance exchanges that opened last week. It was 1 week ago President Obama's health insurance exchanges opened, and by all accounts it was a complete disaster.

The administration had 3½ years to prepare for the big launch. It spent months and millions of dollars advertising the start date. Yet on October 1, the American people had their first chance to sign up, and the exchanges flopped. It was a complete fiasco.