

A fair trade would be modest additions to revenue as part of a balanced plan. A revenue increase of \$300 billion to \$400 billion over 10 years would amount to only 1 percent of the \$37 trillion the federal government is expected to collect over that time. We can't do 1 percent? Of course we can. And by reforming the tax code, we could do it without raising tax rates on a single American.

A similar \$300 billion to \$400 billion in savings out of Medicare and Medicaid would amount to about 3 percent of the \$11 trillion the federal government is expected to spend on health care over that time. We can't do 3 percent? Of course we can. And we must: Health spending is the fastest-growing part of the federal budget, projected to increase from 1 percent of GDP in 1971 to more than 12 percent of GDP in 2050. And the trustees of the Medicare system say it will be insolvent by 2026.

The Post was correct that adoption of a "chained CPI," or consumer price index, system of measuring inflation should be part of any agreement. Most economists say that chained CPI, which accounts for behavioral changes people make when faced with increasing prices, is a more accurate way of measuring inflation. Going to chained CPI would raise revenue because our tax system is indexed for inflation, and it would cut spending because many programs, including Social Security, are indexed for inflation.

Federal spending has been cut by \$900 billion in the Budget Control Act, by \$1.2 trillion in the sequester and by more than \$500 billion in the 2010 continuing resolution. That is spending cuts of \$2.6 trillion, while only \$600 billion in revenue has been added. That is hardly balanced.

To suggest that Democrats should give up on revenue because it's a non-starter with many Republicans is like telling Republicans they should give up on entitlement reform because it is a non-starter with many Democrats. The truth is, both sides need to give a little ground on their must-haves for real progress to be made.

A mini-"grand bargain" would require all of these elements: changes to Social Security and Medicare to ensure their solvency for future generations; a modest increase in revenue so all parts of society participate in getting our country back on track; and changes to the sequester cuts that force nearly all of the deficit savings on less than 30 percent of the budget.

We can do this, but everyone must be prepared to give a little so that our nation can gain a lot.

TRIBUTE TO DR. ASHTON CARTER

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, after 4½ years at top posts in the Pentagon, Dr. Ashton Carter announced last week that in December he will be stepping down as Deputy Secretary of Defense. On this occasion, I want to recognize Ash's many years of distinguished public service—as a scholar, a professional, and a national leader. In so doing, I also thank him for his outstanding leadership of the 2.2 million uniformed and civilian members of the Department of Defense and his unwavering support of their most important mission.

Much can be said of Ash's scholarship. He graduated at the top of his class with honors from Yale University, earning degrees in medieval history and physics. His academic achievement also earned Ash a Rhodes

scholarship, which sent him to Oxford University, where he received a doctorate in theoretical physics.

Much can also be said of Ash's dedication to public service. Before assuming his current position as Deputy Secretary of Defense, Ash ably served as the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics and earlier under President Clinton as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy. Throughout his tenure at the Pentagon, Ash received several Defense Distinguished Service Medals—the Defense Department's highest civilian award—as well as the Defense Intelligence Medal. Ash has also helped to promote the Nation's defense from outside the walls of the Pentagon through his service on the boards and committees of several defense, international security and counterterrorism organizations, as well as at some of the world's finest academic institutions.

In my view, what is just as important as what Ash has done is how he has done it. With regard to the Department's procurement practices, Ash articulated a cogent strategy to improve the Department's buying power and empowered good, talented people throughout the acquisition workforce who have long been concerned about government inefficiency to implement that strategy effectively. Indeed, it could be said that Ash's most significant legacy as the Pentagon's chief weapon's purchaser is that he has helped to force the Department to be as skilled in buying products and services as industry is in selling them. This achievement is perhaps best exemplified, for example, in the restructuring of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program; the successful award of a contract for an aerial refueling tanker; and making tough decisions on some very large, chronically poor-performing weapon procurement programs.

Finally, as Deputy Secretary of Defense, Ash has distinguished himself through his professionalism. Indeed, his commitment, skill, judgment, and temperament are reminiscent of those of some of the Pentagon's finest leaders. There can be no doubt that on many issues relating to defense and national security, Ash and I have had our differences. Some have been profound. But Ash has always conducted himself in a manner that appreciated the valid concerns underlying opposing views, while also mindful of the constitutional responsibilities of the elected officials who hold them. As a result, my working relationship with Ash has always been respectful, candid, clear, and productive. More importantly, it has been conducive to Congress and the Executive working together to address some of the biggest challenges to our national defense.

With this in mind, I join many in thanking Ash for his service and wishing him and his wife Stephanie fair winds and following seas. While Ash

will move on from the Department in December, knowing his insatiable intellectual curiosity and his continuing desire to contribute, I suspect he will never be too far away.

NOMINATION OF MR. THOMAS E. WHEELER

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Madam President, I rise today in support of the nomination of Tom Wheeler to be Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission.

No one can question that Mr. Wheeler is a supremely qualified nominee to lead the FCC. He brings to the job a long and distinguished career in the communications industry. He was a pioneer in the cable and wireless industries, having been instrumental in the growth of both these critical communications sectors. As an entrepreneur, he built businesses and created jobs.

This collective experience provides Mr. Wheeler with a unique insight into the challenges facing the Nation's communications regulator. And it affords him the experience to lead an agency that has the most challenging and complicated set of issues pending before it since the Commission implemented the 1996 Telecommunications Act. I do not say this lightly. The decisions the FCC will make over the next few years will shape the future of the Nation's telephone network, public safety, the wireless industry, broadcasting, the Internet, and consumer protection for decades to come.

The Commission has before it a number of key proceedings to implement my Public Safety Spectrum legislation that became law last year. Not only will the agency implement a new tool for identifying spectrum through voluntary incentive auctions, the revenues from those auctions will provide critical support for deployment of the long-overdue nationwide interoperable wireless broadband network for first responders.

Aside from that work, the Commission is examining the future of the Nation's voice telephone network, and what the transition of that network can mean to longstanding, fundamental tenets of communications policy like universal service, competition, public safety and consumer protection.

The FCC continues to look at the future of media policy in an era when online video distribution looks to disrupt traditional business models and bring more consumer choice to the video industry. The FCC will need to conclude its work on the E-Rate program and update it to meet the next-generation connectivity needs of our schools and libraries. And finally, the FCC will have to implement a decision from the courts on the FCC's net neutrality rules and potentially on the Commission's underlying authority to protect consumers in the broadband age.

I have absolute confidence in Mr. Wheeler's ability to guide the agency through its consideration of these far-

reaching issues. This confidence comes in part from my strong belief that Mr. Wheeler agrees with me that the FCC must always have consumer protection and the public interest as its primary touchstones.

Acting FCC Chairwoman Mignon Clyburn has done an excellent job as the steward of the Commission over the last several months. I am proud of her accomplishments, especially her commencement of a proceeding to strengthen and expand the hugely successful E-Rate program, something our Nation's children deserve. But acting chairs of agencies can only accomplish so much, particularly when they have taken charge of an agency that lacks a full complement of its members. It is past time for the Senate to act on Mr. Wheeler's nomination and to put in place the President's permanent head of this essential agency.

At its core, the FCC is a regulatory agency. Too many have forgotten that the agency's fundamental responsibility is the regulation of communications networks. These regulations serve important policy goals. You cannot have universal service without regulation. You cannot ensure competition without regulation. You cannot have consumer protection without regulation. Given his experience and history, Mr. Wheeler understands the vital role of the Commission and the need for an active, smart regulator for the nation's communications markets.

The Members of the Senate Commerce Committee have fully vetted Mr. Wheeler's nomination. And an overwhelming, bipartisan majority of the committee favorably reported Mr. Wheeler's nomination out of committee in July. At his nomination hearing in June, Mr. Wheeler ably demonstrated his knowledge of the issues the FCC will face in the coming years. Mr. Wheeler answered all of the questions for the record submitted to him after that hearing—including all 78 questions from Republican committee Members. And he did so in a substantive and detailed manner. And honest, thoughtful responses by nominees have always been sufficient for this body to move forward when they are eminently qualified for a position and capable of fulfilling their mission.

It also has not been the practice of the Senate Commerce Committee to demand that a nominee to an independent regulatory agency like the FCC prejudice issues that might come before his or her agency. In fact, it was our colleague and former Commerce Committee Chairman Senator JOHN MCCAIN who, during consideration of a past Republican FCC Chairman nominee, said "Just as it is not appropriate for nominees to the bench be asked how they will vote on a specific issue that is currently before, or likely to come before, their court; it is not appropriate for commissioners who have quasi-judicial responsibilities to prejudice cases they must consider."

As Chairman of the FCC, Mr. Wheeler will be able to use the power of the

FCC to spur universal deployment of advanced technologies, foster job growth and innovation, and protect consumers. This is an agency that oversees, by some estimates, nearly one-fifth of the U.S. economy. This is an agency that has raised over \$50 billion for the U.S. Treasury through spectrum auctions. This is the agency that has, through smart policy, guided the Nation into the digital age. This is the agency that has wide-ranging authority over so many communications services that are a vital part of our daily lives. From broadband to wireless phones to television content to public safety communications—this little agency oversees it all.

Because we entrust the FCC with such great responsibility, we expect a lot from those whom the President chooses to run that agency. I am pleased to support Mr. Wheeler for Chairman of the FCC, and I call on my colleagues to do the same today. With all the important issues before the FCC, it is critical that the agency has a confirmed Chair and strong leader in place. I am confident, given Tom Wheeler's extensive experience and capabilities in the communications industry, he is the right person for this job.

EMPLOYEE BENEFIT RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I wish to bring to my colleagues' attention the work of the Employee Benefit Research Institute, EBRI, in acknowledgment of the institute's 35th anniversary. EBRI is a nonpartisan, objective, and reliable source of information and analysis of private sector health and retirement issues in the Nation. Much of EBRI's work, including its data on qualified retirement accounts and its analysis of health care coverage, is unique and available nowhere else. As a research institution that is well respected by members and policy experts on both sides of the aisle, EBRI is frequently asked to testify on retirement, health, and economic security issues before committees in both the House and Senate. For more than three decades, the institute has provided credible, reliable, and objective research, data, and analysis that Congress can rely on. I congratulate EBRI on its 35th anniversary and look forward to many more years of its valuable, nonpartisan, and dependable analysis.

NATIONAL MEDICINE ABUSE AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, the Centers for Disease Control has declared the misuse and abuse of some prescription and over-the-counter medicines in the United States to be an epidemic. According to the most recent National Survey on Drug Use and Health, NSDUH, there were over a quarter of a million new nonmedical

users of prescription drugs in the past year and 1.9 million new nonmedical users of either prescription or over-the-counter pain relievers. These staggering numbers reflect the urgent need to raise awareness about the dangers associated with medicine abuse. To this end, October has been designated National Medicine Abuse Awareness Month.

Millions of Americans are prescribed medicines every year to treat the symptoms of a variety of injuries and illnesses, from depression to the common cold. Many of these patients do not use the entire amount of medication they were prescribed and either forget about or do not know how to properly dispose of the leftover drug. As a result, half-filled bottles remain in medicine cabinets across the country for months or years. And many of these medicines, when not properly used or administered, can be just as deadly and addictive as street drugs like methamphetamine or cocaine. Indeed, according to the NSDUH, almost 70 percent of those who abused prescription drugs last year obtained them from a friend or relative, many of whom may have had excess drugs remaining in a family medicine cabinet.

As a result, Federal law enforcement and drug policy organizations like the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Office of National Drug Control Policy, as well as national advocacy groups such as the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, the Consumer Healthcare Products Association, and the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, are reaching out to community coalitions throughout the Nation to help raise awareness and address the problem head on.

For example, in my home State of Iowa, the Van Buren County SAFE Coalition—with the help of the local pharmacy and the Van Buren County Reserve Officers—organizes regular drug take-back events at various locations throughout the county to provide an avenue to properly dispose of excess prescription drugs. Additionally, the local pharmacy there has started a take-back program that allows the pharmacy to collect unused and expired medication at any time. Another example of the response to this crisis is the Gateway Impact Coalition, located in Clinton, IA, that has collected nearly 3,500 pounds of old or unwanted medicine from residents in Clinton and Jackson Counties since 2008.

We can stop the growing problem of medicine abuse, but it will require all sectors of the community to join together to make it happen. I applaud the work of community coalitions, such as the Van Buren County SAFE Coalition and the Gateway Impact Coalition, along with many others throughout Iowa and the Nation. I urge my colleagues to do all they can in their home States to make their constituents aware of the dangers associated with the misuse and abuse of prescription and over-the-counter medicines.