

We know the President has rejected his own bipartisan fiscal commission's recommendations, the so-called Simpson-Bowles Commission recommendation, and he has rejected budget proposals put forward by the House of Representatives. Even though our gross national debt has gone up by nearly \$6 trillion under his watch, and even though it is projected to go up another \$9.5 trillion over the next decade, the President seems to be stuck on telling us it is only going to take a little bit more in taxes in order to solve the problem.

The American people understand we do not have a revenue problem, we have a spending problem—spending money we do not have—and the only way to reduce our long-term debt burden is through reining in that spending. And not just the 39 percent of it which represents discretionary spending; we need to reform our entitlement programs, Medicare and Social Security, in order to preserve and to protect those programs for future generations. Yet when we try to enact spending cuts or entitlement reforms, the President, unfortunately, has resorted to shameless fear mongering.

He is now warning that it will be the end of western civilization, or something like it, if we cut the Federal budget by 2.4 percent. When we consider that Federal spending has gone up over 19 percent since 2008, and when we consider how much inefficient and duplicative and downright wasteful spending there is in the Federal Government, it is hard to take this argument seriously.

For example, no one should be talking about raising more taxes from the American people on top of the \$600 billion that was extracted as a result of the fiscal cliff negotiations. No one should be talking about raising more taxes when the Federal Government made more than \$220 billion in improper payments over the last 2 years—that's right, \$220 billion in improper payments in the last 2 years—and this is just one example of costly government waste.

The President does not appear to believe in the urgency of the moment. He does not appear to believe that our country is headed for a true crisis. We all know interest rates are at historically low levels at this time. If interest rates were to go up just 1 percent or 2 percent more, for each percentage increase it would represent more than \$1 trillion in additional interest we would have to pay on our debt. It is easy to see if interest rates were to go back up to historic norms, 4 or 5 percent, that very quickly we would lose control of our financial system, and we would be able to do little more than pay interest on the debt and pay for Medicare and Social Security.

Both Senate Republicans and Democrats have shown that they understand the nature of the crisis we have before us, but we believe it is imperative that we support a budget that reduces our long-term debt.

The only way we can see a significant path forward to debt reduction is if the President joins us in these important negotiations. Unfortunately, so far, the President seems truly allergic to genuine bipartisan compromise.

Until the Obama administration, virtually every landmark domestic policy change in American history was achieved with bipartisan support. We all understand that; it cannot happen any other way. For example, both the 1935 Social Security Act and the 1964 Civil Rights Act were signed by a Democratic President and supported by large majorities of Senate Republicans. The 1996 Welfare Reform Act signed by President Clinton was backed by every single Member of the Republican Senate caucus, along with the majority of Senate Democrats.

Likewise, during the Reagan years, most Senate Democrats voted for the 1983 Social Security amendments, and a whopping 94 percent of Senate Democrats voted for the 1986 Tax Reform Act. Under President George W. Bush 84 percent of Senate Democrats voted for No Child Left Behind.

In other words, Presidents have traditionally understood that reform and results take leadership and only then will bipartisan support follow. Yet the President seems to neglect this obvious fact and instead prefers to continue what seems like a perpetual campaign and knock down straw men rather than actually doing something about our skyrocketing debt.

Real debt reduction will require Presidential leadership, the kind of leadership that President Clinton displayed in 1993 when he convinced 47 percent of Senate Democrats and 40 percent of House Democrats to defy organized labor and support the North American Free Trade Agreement. Since then, U.S. trade with Canada has nearly tripled, and U.S. trade with Mexico has increased almost sixfold.

My hope is that the President will ultimately show the kind of leadership we have seen throughout this Nation's history when we are confronted with big challenges. He has acknowledged the need for serious reform.

I believe he understands the problem perfectly: We cannot preserve and protect Social Security and Medicare unless we deal with those programs now. Yet he has never acted on his words, instead choosing to engage in the perpetual campaign.

As a result, Washington keeps spending money it doesn't have and saddling our children with more debt. Meanwhile our safety-net programs are spiraling toward a collapse that will leave the poor and elderly even more vulnerable. It is time for a change, and it is time for the President to take his rhetoric about debt reduction and turn it into real meaningful reform.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). The Senator from Pennsylvania.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, as I have every year since I came to the Senate, I rise to commemorate Black History Month. This year, we are privileged to recognize Bill Strickland, a man whose approach is unique and whose accomplishments are of great consequence to African-Americans, and in fact, to all Americans. From the age of 19, Bill Strickland has worked tirelessly to improve the lives of those living in poverty, to give them a setting they can thrive in and a future they can take pride in.

Bill grew up in the Manchester neighborhood of Pittsburgh, on the city's north side. Prior to the decline of industry in the city in the mid-1960s, Manchester was a solid, working class community. But by the time Bill was in high school, the area around him had slid into urban decay and instability. Though surrounded by poverty, Bill's mother was determined to provide a safe environment for her family. And though she didn't have a high school diploma herself, Bill's mother held firm to the belief that a good education was the ticket to a better life. At Oliver High School, when he began his senior year Bill had neither plans for after graduation or a clear picture of what his future might look like.

Then one day while walking down the hallway at school, Bill was attracted by the smell of fresh coffee. The coffee, along with the sounds of jazz, led Bill to the art room in Oliver High where he watched a pot being formed from a mound of clay on a turntable. Seated at the potter's wheel was Frank Ross, Oliver High's art teacher who would become Bill's close friend and mentor. Over the next year, in the calm atmosphere of Frank's well-lit art studio, Bill would develop a talent for ceramics. As importantly, it provided a safe and stable sanctuary from the chaos of the streets. At the potter's wheel Bill found his passion, and although he didn't know it yet, he was also forming the beginning of a vision that would become Manchester Bidwell Corporation.

In 1967, Bill graduated from Oliver High School and, at the instance of Frank Ross, applied to the University of Pittsburgh where he was accepted, but only as a probationary student. Although he had begun his studies full-time, Bill never lost the connection with his neighborhood. In the summer of 1968, as Manchester grappled with the racial tensions that swept many inner cities, Bill decided to open an arts center in his neighborhood. He had seen the power a bright, orderly, safe place like Frank Ross' studio and the artistic work done there had had on his own life. He wanted to give the young people of Manchester a place where they too could escape the effects of economic and social devastation and experience something beautiful. A conversation with a young minister working in the area led Bill to his first \$25,000 in funding and the Manchester

Craftsmen's Guild was born as an after-school art program in a donated row house on Buena Vista Street. It was not an overnight success, but Bill never gave up. When young people in the neighborhood weren't immediately taken with ceramics, Bill redoubled his efforts, hitting the streets to reach out to as many people as possible and bring them to his center. People noticed Bill's efforts and the popularity of the Guild grew. As more people came to the center, the center needed more clay, more wheels, and Bill needed to secure more funding.

Along the way, an interesting phenomenon occurred. Teachers began noticing that their students who regularly went to the Guild were doing better academically and behaving better in school. Without intending to, Bill had stumbled across a simple, yet empowering, philosophy—environment shapes people's lives. By providing a safe space for the Manchester youth, and by introducing them to the beauty of the arts, Bill was simultaneously inspiring a large-scale change in his community.

Despite starting as a probationary student, Bill graduated from Pitt cum laude with a BA in History in 1970. Bill continued to work with the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild and a few years after graduation, he became director of the Bidwell Training Center, a school whose mission was to provide education in the building trades disadvantaged and dislocated workers. When Bill assumed his role as head of Bidwell, what he discovered was a dilapidated warehouse in a seedy parking lot and a \$300,000 back tax bill from the IRS. But Bill saw its potential and didn't give up. Bill began to transform Bidwell into a forward-thinking school that offered its students a real chance to dramatically improve their lives. He realized that the changing job market required less focus on construction trades and redirected Bidwell's focus to the hightech and medical industries. He also forged important partnerships with corporations like IBM, Heinz) and Bayer to design curriculums that would train the workers that employers needed. While he worked to improve the staff and the quality of the education, the nature of Bidwell's funding meant that Bill could not address what he saw as one of the institutions central flaws: The building. With funding for social projects harder to come by in the 1980s, Bill was forced to lay-off nearly one-third of his staff just to make payroll. But despite the set-back, in his own eyes, Bill's vision was clearer than ever. Bill realized that what he needed to make Bidwell succeed was a center of which students, faculty, and neighbors could be proud.

To achieve his dream, Bill contacted legendary Pittsburgh architect Tasso Kastelas, a student of Frank Lloyd Wright, to design a world class center in one of the worst neighborhoods in Pittsburgh. For \$10,000, Bill commissioned the architect to build a model of

what would later become the home of the Manchester Bidwell Corporation, as the combined programs of the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild and the Bidwell Training Center would come to be known. Bill had a vision for his building and the conviction that the future of his cause lay in its construction. Just as he had done before, Bill took it upon himself to turn his dream into a reality and spearheaded a \$6.5 million capital campaign. Model in hand, he implored the Pittsburgh corporate community to help fund his dream. When the city's corporate donors, who had supported him previously, told him that Manchester didn't need such a spectacular center, he told them in no uncertain terms that it did. When he was told he needed matching funds to obtain his corporate pledges, he turned to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for additional support.

In 1986 the new 62,000 square foot arts and career training center opened. Originally the center consisted of studios as well as classrooms, workshops, gallery spaces, and a 350-seat auditorium. Over the years the building has expanded as Bill's vision expanded. In 1987 the jazz hall, which has seen performances from the likes of Dizzy Gillespie and Nancy Wilson, was added and in 2003 the 40,000 square foot state-of-the-art greenhouse opened. The center currently provides training in fields as varied as gourmet food preparation, chemical, office, and medical technologies, and education arts programming in ceramics, design arts, digital arts, and photography.

Bill's center and his students success stories are a testament to the power of social entrepreneurship. What began as a mission to provide an escape from the ghetto has produced unparalleled results in educational empowerment and community growth. Manchester Craftsmen's Guild "Youth in Arts" is a program that strives to educate and inspire urban young people through the arts. Ninety-three of the high school students who participate in the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild "Youth in Arts" program graduate from high school, a noticeable improvement over the national graduation rate of 75.5 percent. The Bidwell Training Center has changed lives by providing market-driven career training to disadvantaged adults in transition. Its training programs continue to place skilled technicians in middle-class jobs at companies such as Bayer, Mylan Labs, and Heinz. MCG Jazz, Manchester-Bidwell's record label, has been nominated for seven Grammy awards and has brought four home to Pittsburgh. The orchids grown in the facility's greenhouse have won Best in Show at a Western Pennsylvania orchid fair and are even available for purchase at Whole Foods. And while they are learning medical coding or how to center clay, each student is fed a gourmet lunch prepared by culinary students in the center's top-of-the-line kitchen.

Realizing the opportunity to strengthen other communities and effect change on an even larger scale by using the Manchester Bidwell model of community and educational development as a template, Bill helped found the National Center for Arts and Technology to replicate the Manchester Bidwell education model across the nation. NCAT collaborates with local nonprofits and businesses to assess their community's needs and then works together with the community to design a fitting center for arts and technology. Bill's Pittsburgh model has been replicated in San Francisco, Cincinnati, Cleveland, New Haven, Connecticut and Grand Rapids, MI. He gained some powerful backers including Jeff Skoll, founder of eBay and the Skoll Foundation. The Skoll Foundation was one of Bill's earlier investors; it recognized the potential of his programs to drive large scale positive social change by using entrepreneurial discipline and methods. With the Skoll Foundation's help, Bill clarified his sales pitch—that he could help solve problems faced in communities, had a strategic business plan showing the benefits of working together, and offering people meaning and hope through transforming experiences.

Bill has said that "environment determines behavior" and he has created a remarkable environment where men and women living in poverty are treated with dignity and respect. Knowing firsthand that poverty creates self-defeating assumptions and restrictive labels but does not define a person's potential, Bill has dedicated his life to changing the lives of others by offering them hope, meaning, and belief in the power of their own creative possibilities. Bill's methods might be unconventional, but his results are success stories of epic proportions. And so in the Senate today we express our gratitude to Bill for never giving up on the poor kids or his vision. His passion and his belief in the abilities of each and every individual that walks through his doors has touched lives far beyond Manchester and, thanks to his tireless efforts, truly has the potential to reach around the world.

I thank Bill Strickland for his contribution to the City of Pittsburgh, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and our Nation.

Mr. President, 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.

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

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.