

87 percent over the course of the Obama administration.

A Politico poll released this week found that “strong majorities now say that they lack the savings to grapple with an unforeseen job loss”—61 percent of the people in the poll said that—“and that the cost of basic household items like gas and groceries has strained their finances. . . .”—62 percent of the people polled had that response.

It is not surprising that a recent George Washington University/Battle-ground poll found that 70 percent of Americans think the country is “on the wrong track.”

With these challenges facing the American people, our focus in the Senate this year should have been legislation to address our struggling economy and to repair the damage ObamaCare is doing to families and businesses. Instead, Senate Democrats have chosen to focus the Senate’s efforts on politics. The Democrat-led Senate has failed in its most basic responsibility this year; and that is to pass solutions for the American people.

With just a few days left in the session, it is a little late for Democrats to do anything about that now.

I hope that when we return in November things will be different. I hope Democrats will spend less time trying to save their jobs and more time trying to create jobs for the American people. I hope they will spend less time campaigning and more time legislating. I hope they will be ready to work with Republicans to deliver solutions for the American people.

That is what we are here to do. That is what we ought to be focused on. All this using the floor of the Senate to conduct campaigns doesn’t serve any constructive purpose when it comes to solving problems and meeting the challenges being faced by the American people every single day—chronic high employment, a sluggish economy, reduced take-home pay, higher costs for health care, groceries, fuel, college education, we go right down the list. These are the real and present impacts of this economy on the American people and middle-class families.

Congress can do better. The American people deserve better. I hope when the dust settles and the smoke clears from the November elections, we will come back with a renewed sense of purpose and focus on what is truly important to the people we represent.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

SPENDING AND DEBT

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, as we consider this continuing resolution to fund the Federal Government in fiscal year 2015, which begins October 1, I rise to voice concern about our Nation’s spending and debt. At last count our country was more than \$17 trillion in debt, and that number increases every single day.

My parents told me you shouldn’t just complain, you should have solutions, and I am going to talk about two solutions.

One is the Penny Plan, which would cut 1 cent out of every dollar we currently spend and, according to the Congressional Budget Office, balance the budget in just 3 years. If we continued it for another 7 years, we would reduce spending by \$7.6 trillion.

Another solution would be to do biennial budgeting. We obviously don’t have time to look through the budget—we keep doing continuing resolutions and then we do an omnibus bill. We are supposed to do those through 12 separate bills—12 separate bills that get debated not just in committee but on the floor of the Senate with amendments. It has been a long time since we have done that. So biennial budgeting would allow us to get into this nerve center of spending and get something done.

For fiscal year 2014, we expect to pay \$231 billion in interest on the national debt according to the Congressional Budget Office. With our pattern of unsustainable spending, in 10 years we could pay close to \$800 billion in interest. That is not counting the interest rate going up. Now, \$231 billion this year at 1 percent is about what we are paying, but imagine if that went to 5 percent. That would put us over \$1 trillion. That is what we are talking about spending in this continuing resolution, and if we are doing it all on interest, that eliminates defense and all the other things we put our money into. That is more to our creditors than we currently spend on national defense.

Our future interest payments would be even higher if interest goes up more than CBO has predicted. The interest we pay on our debt doesn’t buy anything. A large portion of that just pays other countries for loaning us money.

The Federal Government consistently spends billions more than it takes in, and the CBO reported in August that if current laws remain unchanged, growing budget deficits over the long term will push the debt even higher. Yet today we are considering legislation to continue discretionary funding on autopilot.

The continuing resolution funds Federal programs through December 11, 2014, at the current annual rate of \$1.012 trillion. We will not have any debate. We will have an up-or-down vote and spend another \$1 trillion. The legislation does nothing to address the CBO projection that our ratio of public debt to gross domestic product—that is everything our economy earns in the United States—will reach 74 percent by the end of this fiscal year, twice that of just 7 years ago and higher than any year since 1950.

We are doing nothing to reverse CBO’s projection that in 25 years Federal debt held by our constituents will exceed 100 percent of gross domestic product—again, everything we produce in the United States in 1 year. The CBO notes that this trend, which I view as

perilous, cannot be sustained indefinitely.

I ask my Senate colleagues what would happen if we as individuals adopted the same spending habits held by the government. I can tell them with little doubt that over the long term we would each face bankruptcy, and that is the point. Sometimes it seems we have our heads buried in the sand. Are we in denial? Sometimes we act as if there are different sets of principles for the Federal budget and the outcome of excessive personal spending. But I am here to tell you, the same potentially dire consequences face the government that face individuals if we do not put our fiscal house in order.

Our President often frames issues in the context of how it would affect his daughters. Similar to the President, at times I am up at night with concerns about how our country’s fiscal path will affect the lives of my children and grandchildren. I worry about how our debt will harm families and generations to come.

Sometimes as lawmakers we seem to act as if this problem is too big to solve, but it is not. Understanding how to reach and maintain financial health is not rocket science. It merely requires exercising common sense and commitment.

As individuals we learn to live within our means. If we spend too much, we tighten our belts and we work hard to ease our financial situation. The government should and could do the same. We can’t wait longer. It is time for us to act.

I have introduced the Penny Plan as a simple and straightforward way to put our country back on the right fiscal path. It reduces discretionary and mandatory spending, less net interest payments, by 1 percent—or 1 penny for every dollar—for each year of 3 years until total spending has reached approximately 18 percent of gross domestic product. Based on figures from the CBO, reducing spending this way will result in a balanced budget within 3 years. Total spending would then be capped at 18 percent for subsequent years since that is the historic average level of government spending for the past several decades.

Importantly, the Penny Plan steers us away from some of the controversial and political traps we have seen for spending reductions. At the onset, it does not identify the specific cuts that are necessary to achieve this 1-percent reduction in savings. Instead, such decisions are left for us to make. Its beauty is it puts a broad plan into action and gives flexibility.

I have had a lot of grassroots interest in this. I have had a number of organizations that have done resolutions. I have a lot of individuals who have signed up on my Web site as cosponsors of the action that is needed to be taken. I encourage people to go to my Web site and become a part of this movement to show there is interest in balancing the budget and in paying down the debt.

I ask unanimous consent that a copy of one of the resolutions be printed in the RECORD.

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

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE ONE PERCENT
SPENDING REDUCTION ACT OF 2014

Whereas, the U.S. National debt currently exceeds \$17.5 trillion and continues to grow; Whereas, the estimated population of the United States is 318,360,075, so each citizen's share of this debt is \$55,037.88.

Whereas, the National Debt has continued to increase an average of \$2.38 billion per day since September 30, 2012.

Whereas, the "One Percent Spending Reduction Act of 2014" reduces discretionary and mandatory spending (less interest payments) by 1 percent each year for 3 years until total spending has reached approximately 18 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).

Whereas, the Congressional Budget Office reports that reduced spending in this fashion would result in a balanced budget in FY2017.

Whereas, total spending would then be capped at 18 percent of GDP for FY2018 and subsequent fiscal years.

Whereas, over a 10-year budget window, the bill would cut spending by about \$7.6 trillion from currently projected levels.

Whereas, the bill amends the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 to make it out of order in both chambers to consider any bill, joint resolution, amendment, or conference report that includes any provision that would cause the most recently reported, current spending limit to be exceeded.

Whereas, the "One Percent Spending Reduction Act of 2014" is also referred to as the Penny Plan.

Whereas, upon passage by Congress and signature from the President of the United States, the Penny Plan would be effective in FY2015 and each fiscal year thereafter.

Whereas, the Penny Plan would quickly halt the nation's debt spiral and set our country on a fiscally responsible path.

Therefore, the Board of Directors of the Petroleum Association of Wyoming supports the One Percent Spending Reduction Act of 2014, on this 20th day, August 2014.

Mr. ENZI. Another step we can take to stop the autopilot spending path we are on, passing the CRs year after year, is to enact my Biennial Appropriations Act. The legislation we are considering illustrates once again why we need to pass my bill.

In less than 1 month the new Federal fiscal year begins. Yet once again we have not passed a single one of the 12 appropriations bills for the 2015 fiscal year which starts October 1. Our answer? Another short-term continuing resolution. What will come after that? One big omnibus bill put together by a couple people in the backroom and we will get to vote yes or no on it.

That is not responsible spending. We have to be able to look at the items in the bill. A short-term continuing resolution is not the way the government should operate, nor does it meet the expectations of those who sent us to Washington to represent them. It is no wonder our approval rating is sinking perpetually lower.

Congress should debate each individual spending bill. It should vote on amendments and it should pass all 12 separate spending bills.

However, the last time we passed all the appropriations bills separately before the start of the fiscal year was 20 years ago, in 1994. That is a pretty poor record, especially since that is the main responsibility we are charged with overseeing spending for the United States. We ought to be starting on the spending bills April 15, right after the budget is required to be finished—which also doesn't get finished by then—and considering each of those until we have resolution on each of them. We could easily have that done before October 1.

When we don't follow that regular order, we can't adequately consider the detail including a line-by-line look at individual programs and an analysis of appropriate funding levels and duplication in government. Inevitably, we get the types of agreements reached in January in which Congress is given one chance to vote on \$1.1 trillion, up or down, with no amendments.

It is time for this chronic and debilitating pattern to stop. We have to start legislating and stop deal-making. My biennial appropriations bill would allow for each of the appropriations bills to be taken up over a 2-year period. That gives us a little more time to do it. It would also give the agencies 2 years' worth of time to use that money the most efficient way possible, instead of having to worry each year and then not receive the money until late.

The six most controversial bills—the six that are the toughest—we take up right after an election. The six that are the easiest we take up just before the election. That way we can get through both of them in some detail and not have to worry about the election. The Defense appropriations bill, however, would be taken up each year. Another one of our main charges is to ensure the defense of our country, and this would allow us to scrutinize the spending details and eliminate duplication and waste there as well.

Biennial budgeting is an idea both parties have endorsed.

In 2000, former OMB Director, now-Treasury Secretary, Jack Lew told the House Rules Committee that the budget process took so much time that there wasn't as much time to devote to making programs better. He said: "I think biennial budgeting, if it is properly designed, could very much help alleviate these pressures."

I think anybody who observes our appropriations process would agree we need to do something different. If we keep on doing what we have always been doing, we are going to keep on getting what we have, which is an omnibus bill of \$1.1 trillion with little scrutiny. We can't keep doing that. Let's move our budget and appropriations process into the 21st century, providing the prudent oversight and judgment of our budget and appropriations while at the same time guaranteeing a more secure future for the generations to come.

We need to pass the Penny Plan and biennial budgeting, get our spending under control, and change our legislative process to where we actually make decisions on how government tax dollars are being spent.

As I have said before, one of the reasons government expands is we have this rule of RIFing people, which is, if someone is the last person hired, they are the first person fired.

Consequently, as soon as someone gets a government job, it is very important for them to expand their workload, because if they can expand their workload, they can show they need an assistant. Once they have an assistant on board, they are not the first one fired. I attribute a lot of the reports produced as a means to expand work so somebody has something to do so they can get an assistant. We can't keep doing that. That leads to duplication.

I hope we will pay attention to the Penny Plan and the biennial budgeting process. I will be giving more details on that as we go along.

I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

(The remarks of Senator SANDERS pertaining to the introduction of S. 2832 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, thank you very much. With that, I would yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. (Ms. HEITKAMP). Without objection, it is so ordered.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, last week the House of Representatives voted for the 53rd time to repeal or undermine all of—or aspects of—the Affordable Care Act. This is beginning to sound like a broken record. I was in the House of Representatives for a period of time, so I had the privilege to vote on 30 or 40 of those different pieces of legislation.

Republicans, of course, shut down the government a year ago because of their pique over the health care law. There are those who still have a desire to shut down the government again.

The other day one of our colleagues said they were hopeful that among the