

Of course, he has not put forward any legislation or plan in this Congress. So if we want to talk specifics, we have to look at his previous plan, which he released in the 113th Congress.

Under that plan, the current taxable maximum is preserved, as are current payroll tax rates. The new twist is that his plan imposes current payroll tax rates on earnings above \$250,000 a year, which, evidently, is where the distinction between the so-called rich and everyone else lies, in their opinion.

That \$250,000 threshold is not—let me repeat—is not indexed to inflation. Earnings subject to the tax above \$250,000 a year would not be included in earnings used to compute benefits, which is to say that under this plan a worker would pay Social Security taxes on earnings above \$250,000 a year, with no corresponding increase in Social Security benefits.

Again, this would move the system away from a self-financed insurance program toward what some would call welfare and redistribution. Since the new \$250,000 threshold is not indexed, eventually more and more earnings will become subject to increased Social Security taxes without getting anything in terms of benefits and return.

In around 20 years, middle-class earners who today have just surpassed the taxable maximum will be pushed into the earnings category where they lose the connection between Social Security taxes and corresponding benefits.

At that time, an indexed income equivalent of what is around \$120,000 a year today will be deemed to be rich, with earnings above that amount worthy of being taxed more for Social Security but not worthy of receiving any additional Social Security benefits.

So what does the Senator's scheme that, once again, was put forward in the last Congress, accomplish? Admittedly, it does extend the solvency of Social Security by around 28 years or so, but it still does not make the system financially sustainable in the long run, leaving an assured financial shortfall and attendant need for yet more taxes or benefits cuts, and leaving it to younger generations or workers to figure it out. More than likely it will, in many respects, sever the connection between what people pay in to Social Security and what they can expect to get out of this program in terms of benefits. Once again, this represents a fundamental shift in Social Security policy, one that some may support but few are now willing to openly defend.

I look forward to debating, discussing, and voting on any plan that any of my friends on the other side of the aisle put forward to tackle Social Security's financial challenges, including any new plan the junior Senator from Vermont wants to put forward, particularly if it resembles the plan he introduced last Congress. Indeed, I would be anxious to see how many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle want to go on record in support of yet more tax increases and a funda-

mental shift in the nature of the Social Security Program.

In the meantime, we still have the pending depletion of reserves in the DI trust fund, which is something we will have to address before the end of calendar year 2016.

From my perspective, the sooner we tackle this challenge the better, but it is hard to act when we have an administration that refuses to engage in discussion and seems to want to make this a partisan issue by putting forward a plan to reallocate payroll taxes from one trust fund to another without any further discussion or debate.

What I continue to hear from the administration and many of its allies in Congress are stale talking points, many of which are wrong or distorted, and a "take it or leave it" approach to deliberating over the reallocation scheme devised unilaterally by this administration. The only thing this administration appears willing to discuss when it comes to Social Security is its own kick-the-can strategy coupled with additional administrative funds for the SSA, either funded with yet more Federal debt or by crowding out spending on other discretionary programs.

Meanwhile, I am comforted by many in the disability advocacy community who are at least willing to have conversations about how we can work to improve Social Security's programs while also paying attention to its financial challenges. There are several groups currently hard at work analyzing options and having debate and discussion about what we could look at for program improvements and fiscal responsibility.

There is certainly more we can do to improve the DI system and help make it work better for beneficiaries. There is certainly more we can do to improve Social Security's retirement side to help make it work better for modern family situations. There is certainly more we can do on the program integrity side, including some of the President's proposals and more. There is certainly more we can do to protect against frivolous decisionmaking by administrative law judges in the DI program—and there is plenty of that which is costing us arms and legs. There is certainly more we can do to reduce fraud in the DI program, which literally robs resources from those truly in need.

Sadly, the Obama administration's approach to DI and Social Security in general has thus far been largely to remain silent, even in the face of the impending DI trust fund exhaustion. The only major structural change the administration briefly considered was adoption of the chained CPI in governmentwide price indexation coupled with benefit enhancements for vulnerable populations. However, the President has since withdrawn even that modest proposal and has publicly stated he would not even discuss the idea unless he was assured of getting yet

another tax hike for the general fund to go along with it.

As I have said before, it is premature to kick the can down the road again by agreeing on some payroll tax reallocation between the two trust funds in Social Security as a temporary patch of convenience and a patch that was unilaterally constructed by this administration.

Yes, there have been reallocations among many trust funds in the past, under many varying circumstances, and, yes, many of them have had bipartisan support, but we have known about this coming shortfall for roughly 20 years. In other words, Congress has had roughly 20 years to come up with solutions to help put the DI program and perhaps Social Security in general on a path to long-term financial sustainability, and Congress has failed.

We are now being asked by the current administration to double down on that failed approach—to do another reallocation of push the problem further down the road and hope that in the interim Congress will not fail again.

President Obama, in other policy areas, has argued that if decades show a policy is not working, then "it's time for a new approach." Sadly, that sentiment does not seem to apply when he is talking about Social Security.

As I have said before, it seems we have two paths to choose from; one is the path I prefer, involving examination and discussion of what we can do to enhance the DI program and its finances and what we can agree upon; the other is to engage in divisive political rhetoric and demagogue the issue even further, which is irresponsible, in my view, and not what disabled American workers and all workers insured by the DI program should tolerate.

I repeat my previous call to my colleagues in the Senate: To anyone from either party who wishes to engage in a constructive dialogue about how to fix and improve the DI program and Social Security in general, my door is open. In the meantime, I plan to take whatever steps I can as the chairman of the committee of jurisdiction to help preserve these programs for beneficiaries in the near and long term.

We can't keep going down this way of always demanding more taxes and more spending to solve problems we could have solved a long time ago. We are going to have to get serious about this, and I intend to see that we do.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### SPORTSMEN'S ACT

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to speak on the

Sportmen's Act of 2015, and I will start out by acknowledging the great work by the chair of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Senator MURKOWSKI of Alaska, who has been a great partner in quickly moving this legislation forward.

The Sportsmen's Act of 2015 is gaining new momentum and earning widespread bipartisan support from both sides of the aisle, from the east coast to the west coast and, frankly, everywhere in between. Improving access for hunters and anglers, restoring wildlife habitat, and protecting the way of life that so many of us cherish are things we can all agree on because as Americans we all have a unique and deep connection to the outdoors.

The Sportmen's Act of 2015 includes a broad array of bipartisan measures to enhance opportunities for hunters, anglers, and outdoor recreation enthusiasts. It reauthorizes key conservation programs, improves access to our public lands, and helps boost the outdoor recreation economy. Hunting is a way of life for me and for many families across this great Nation.

Similar to many New Mexicans, my 11-year-old son and I went out hunting on public land last fall. The bull elk we brought home will feed our family for most of the coming year, but more importantly the experience of backpacking into the Sangre de Cristos and Carson National Forest, sleeping on the ground, and hearing the elk bugle all around us will feed my son's imagination for decades to come.

The Sportmen's Act will help ensure that American families can pass on these outdoor traditions year after year and for generations to come.

When I travel around New Mexico and talk with sportsmen and sports-women, their No. 1 issue is access, and that is why I am so pleased that a provision I have been championing to unlock countless public lands is included in this package. Public lands, such as the Gila Wilderness, Valles Caldera National Preserve, and the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument are some of the most special places to hunt and fish left on the planet.

The HUNT Act directs all Federal public land management agencies to identify our shared lands where hunting and fishing and outdoor recreation are permitted but where access is non-existent or significantly restricted and develop plans to provide that access.

Additionally, a provision led by my colleague, Montana Senator JON TESTER, is also included in this bill to require a percentage of our annual Land and Water Conservation Funds to be made available to improve recreational access to difficult-to-reach public lands.

Among many other bipartisan, pragmatic efforts to enhance opportunities for hunters and anglers, the Sportsmen's Act would reauthorize NAWCA, the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act.

It is clear these efforts increase and reaffirm our country's commitment to the conservation of fish and wildlife habitat, but they are just as important for the future of our economy across the West.

Nationally, according to the Outdoor Industry Association, more than 140 million Americans either make their living off the outdoors or make outdoor activity a priority in their daily lives. When they do that, they end up spending \$646 billion on outdoor recreation, resulting in quality jobs for another 6.1 million Americans.

In my home State of New Mexico—a small State with just 2 million people—outdoor recreation generates more than \$6 billion a year. It provides 68,000 jobs and \$1.7 billion in wages and annual salaries.

A survey done recently by New Mexico Game and Fish found that sportsmen alone spend more than \$613 million per year in our State. This boost to our economy is felt by business owners, outfitter guides, hotels, restaurants, gas stations, and the entire local community—especially in our rural communities. The truth is our deep connection to the outdoors is part of the American experience and it is part of our heritage and culture in the West. It is something we learn from our mothers and fathers and pass down to our sons and our daughters.

The Sportmen's Act will help protect that heritage and ensure it continues for generations to come.

I thank the Presiding Officer for indulging me, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

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#### HONORING VIETNAM VETERANS AND NORTH DAKOTA'S SOLDIERS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN VIETNAM

Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, today I rise to speak about and honor our Nation's Vietnam veterans, particularly North Dakota's Vietnam veterans. Since I took office, I have made it a priority to travel throughout North Dakota to meet with my State's veterans, so many wonderful men and women who continue to serve not only their country but also our State and their communities. All these veterans deserve a place of honor in our society.

We are in the midst of the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam war. On May 25, 2012, President Obama issued this proclamation calling on the Nation to honor Vietnam veterans and to honor particularly those brave servicemembers who gave their lives in service to their country.

This special period of honoring our Vietnam veterans runs through 2025.

Today I follow up on a commitment I made last year. I want to focus on North Dakota's soldiers who lost their lives in Vietnam. In this effort, I have partnered with students from Bismarck High School in researching these soldiers. I want to thank their instructors, Lori Forde, Sara Rinas, and Allison Wendel for coordinating this project and sharing their students' research with my office. I think this is a wonderful partnership to explain and to research a war that was long forgotten for many of these young students.

Throughout this effort I want to make sure our Nation never forgets the needs of our Vietnam veterans. I want to make sure our Nation continues further to honor them. I have a poster that we have created that will be placed in every one of our offices, both in Washington, DC, and in my various State offices. I am hopeful we will be able to distribute this poster throughout all of the veterans service organizations in North Dakota as we continue this period of remembrance.

In North Dakota, we take much pride in our history and devotion to service. When our Nation, our State, and our community are called, North Dakotans stand up—no matter what the cost. And 198 sons of North Dakota did not make it home from the Vietnam war; 198 sons of North Dakota gave their lives in service to the freedom of this country. These sons, brothers, and fathers have made the ultimate sacrifice.

Today, I want to honor them individually by talking about the lives of these individuals—some of these individual members. I intend throughout this Congress to come to the floor and remember each one of them individually and remember each one of their sacrifices.

#### DAVID ELSBERND

So today, I begin with David Elsbernd. He was born June 28, 1949, and he was from the community of Crosby. He served in the Army in the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. The date of his death was September 9, 1969. He was 20 years old. David had a sister and three brothers—one who also served. The brother who also served was injured in Vietnam. David's father remembers him as a kind, generous person who thought of everyone else first.

Fellow soldier Paul Hughes wrote the book "The Light Within," which includes an account of David's death. David's family is thankful to his fellow soldiers and friends for taking care of him.

#### ELROY BEIER

Elroy Beier was born February 26, 1947, and grew up in Langdon. He served in the Army in the 101st Airborne Division. His date of death was May 5, 1968. He was 21 years old. He had three brothers and one sister. His mother Violet was proud to be a Gold Star Mother and was a member of the VFW and the American Legion Auxiliary.

Elroy played basketball for Langdon Area High School. In Vietnam, Elroy