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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Holy God, Superintendent of the universe, thank You that You give us the gift of forgiveness. In spite of our shortcomings, You continue to bury our mistakes in the sea of forgetfulness. Help us to respond with loving gratitude for Your generous mercies.

Today, use our lawmakers to advance Your kingdom. Lord, enable them to contribute to the well-being of our Nation and world. Help them to remember as they labor they are either making a deposit or a withdrawal. May all the deliberations on this high hill of our Nation's life begin, continue, and end with You.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The majority leader is recognized.

A BALANCED BUDGET

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, throughout the Obama era, families across the country have had to make a lot of tough decisions. Lost jobs or lower wages meant doing more with less and refocusing on what truly mattered. It wasn't easy, but families

made the best of difficult situations in order to position themselves for greater success in the better days to come.

Meanwhile, in Washington, we saw record levels of overspending, trillion-dollar deficits, and historic levels of debt. Hard-working families made tough choices while the Obama administration and its allies aimed to keep right on overspending. It was more than just wrong; many would say it was unfair.

But, today, Democrats can join together with Republicans to help rectify the inequity. Instead of having Washington play by one set of rules and the middle class by another, we can force Washington to start confronting very big challenges, just as everyone else has to do.

We can force Washington to focus on serving the middle class again instead of the other way around, and we can begin by passing the balanced budget before the Senate today.

This balanced budget pivots on an essential truth—that Washington has a spending problem, not a revenue problem—and strives to make government more accountable, more efficient, and more accessible. It represents a significant step forward when it comes to solving our country's many fiscal challenges.

But that is just one reason this balanced budget is so important. Here is another: It will help promote economic growth right now and promote sustained opportunity well into the future.

It aims to do so in a variety of ways; one is promoting energy advancement as an engine for growth. The energy revolution is truly historic. It is creating thousands of jobs, lowering costs for the middle class, and helping lift many into that middle class. This budget embraces that progress. It aims to remove needless barriers to environmentally responsible energy development. I expect other Members to come to the floor to discuss the energy component in greater detail today.

I also expect Members will come to discuss funding America's national security needs. As we know, there are numerous threats facing our country—terrorism practiced by groups such as ISIL, Al Qaeda and its associates; Iranian efforts to advance its ballistic missile program, pursue a nuclear weapon, and sponsor terror; and Russian and Chinese attempts to expand their spheres of influence, which will require us to modernize our force.

We must eventually give the Defense Department the certainty it needs to modernize the force. Members continue to work toward solutions for funding defense in the most robust and predictable way possible.

I commend Chairman ENZI and Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM for providing us with a path forward in the interim. Their proposal represents a good-faith compromise to begin the legislative process for the Defense authorization bill we will consider later this year—when the additional overseas contingency funds can be prudently allocated against the actual procurement and modernization needs of our military, if only for the coming fiscal year.

Short of revising the BCA, this is the best strategy to keep faith with our armed services, and this is the best option we currently have for leaving President Obama's successor in a better position to face so many global challenges.

Every budget, obviously, is a compromise. This one is surely that, but it is a good compromise. It embraces growth. It reaches for a more prosperous energy future. It positions our Nation for a better outcome than we have seen otherwise on defense. It is bold, yet balanced, and it aims to change Washington's focus away from the needs of big-spending politicians and toward the aspirations of hard-working Americans who are very right to demand a government that is efficient, accountable, and focused on growth.

- This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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This budget is all of those things, and I urge our colleagues to support it.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

THE BUDGET

Mr. REID. Mr. President, these budgets we deal with are more than just a piece of paper with a lot of numbers. Each budget we put forward and the Republicans put forward are statements of our values, and it tells Americans basically whose side we are on.

I think, when we look at these budgets, we will find the budget we have propounded—and we will see when the votes take place this week—contains values that put the middle class first. Ours is a budget that supports hard-working families, creates jobs, and invests in our future.

The Republicans, by contrast, have developed a budget that attacks the middle class and serves the interests of special interests and the superwealthy. How can I say that? I say that because it is the truth.

For example, here are some of the priorities the Republicans are proposing in their budget. They want to take away health care from 16.4 million Americans now insured through ObamaCare. The Senate Republicans' budget wreaks havoc on Medicare at the expense of America's seniors. The Senate Republicans' budget makes drastic cuts to Medicaid and undercuts millions of families who rely on it to pay for nursing homes and other care. A lot of the care we have in nursing homes is not for people who are indigent; it is for people who have had to go to Medicaid because everything they have worked for their whole life is gone.

The budget the Republicans are pushing guts nutrition assistance for those in need, slices job training and employment services for millions of American workers, and it cuts billions of financial aid for college students. That is the truth.

These items are all attacking middle-class priorities. The Republicans, as usual, have gone the extra mile to protect special interests and the super-rich.

Incredibly, even as they take money away from hard-working families, seniors, and students, Republicans will not close a single tax loophole to reduce the deficit—not one. Do they indirectly pay those super-rich more money? Of course they do.

Forbes magazine had an article. For 2 years, between 2011 and 2013, the top 14 richest people in America gained during that period of time almost \$200 billion. It is hard to comprehend, but it is true—14 people, about \$200 billion.

Would the budget that has been put forth by the Republicans end tax breaks for companies that ship jobs

overseas? No. Would they close loopholes for wealthy hedge fund managers? No. Would they take away wasteful and unneeded breaks for these huge oil and gas companies? No, not a single one. Would they ask millionaires and even billionaires to pay a penny more? No, not one.

Attacking the middle class while protecting the superwealthy isn't just irresponsible, some would say it is immoral.

There is more. The budget is dishonest. It claims to balance the budget, but it doesn't. To talk about balancing the budget over 10 years is so foolish and so untrue.

USA TODAY—the newspaper—said the Republicans' budget relies "heavily on huge and politically unlikely spending cuts and bewildering gimmicks that don't begin to add up."

The New York Times, in one of its op-eds, said the budget is a "trillion dollar con job."

I am not saying this. We have USA TODAY and the New York Times.

But who is being fooled here? In fact, there is one area where so far many people have been fooled and they have been fooled a lot.

During the markup of the budget resolution, Senate Republicans claimed to increase defense spending by adding an extra \$38 billion in war funding, known as overseas contingency operations or OCO as we call it. The Republican leader talked about that a few minutes ago, but that money isn't even close to being real. Because of what seems to be a drafting error, not one extra dollar can be spent on defense above the sequestration caps.

The resolution currently on the floor puts a strict cap on OCO spending. For whatever reason, Republicans neglected to increase the cap to allow for the additional \$38 billion for defense. In other words, the Republicans' extra defense money is a fraud, a hoax, and certainly a political gimmick.

We want to provide real sequestration relief, which has so bewildered the country in so many different ways, not only to defense but also the National Institutes of Health and virtually every program in America. We are going to propose just that as we move forward to get rid of sequestration.

So we all look forward on this side to the debate. When it is over, Americans will have no doubt which party stands with the middle class and which party stands with special interests, millionaires, and billionaires.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET, FISCAL YEAR 2016

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. Con. Res. 11, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 11) setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2016 and setting forth the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2017 through 2025.

Pending:

Sanders/Wyden amendment No. 323, to create millions of middle class jobs by investing in our nation's infrastructure paid for by raising revenue through closing loopholes in the corporate and international tax system.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Colleagues, good morning. Working with Senator SANDERS yesterday, we made good progress on opening day for the budget resolution. It might not have been as fun as being at opening day for baseball, but getting underway on the first balanced budget resolution this Senate has seen in nearly 20 years was pretty exciting for me, and I appreciate the good work and the full debate we have had.

Today, I am looking forward to more work on a variety of amendment ideas for the resolution. Some Senators want to debate amendment ideas that have to do with the budget and some Senators want to debate amendment ideas that have nothing to do with the budget. So we will hear from some Senators today on issues such as our spending caps or the sequester, how best to preserve and protect Social Security, and what is the best way to ensure women are treated fairly in the workforce.

Other Senators may want to discuss items such as how to treat the waterways of the United States, free from overreach from the EPA, or how our communities and localities are under siege from Washington when it comes to ideas about taxing carbon or coal, and Senators may wish to discuss how our national security is best served by the spending levels contemplated in the budget. But we will also hear about something that really interests me, as it marries the numbers our budget resolution carries with the work our committees and Congress can do once the budget is passed.

I think one of the frustrations of the other side is this is a fairly general budget because it sets the spending limits for the committees and then builds in some reserve funds for some flexibility. It doesn't go into the specifics of exactly how the committees are to operate. The reason for that is the committees are the people who have at least an intense interest in that field or maybe even a lot of expertise. When we try to preclude what they are doing by what we do in the budget, it won't work.

We will also hear about something that marries the numbers our budget resolution carries with the work our committees and Congress can do once the budget is passed. The statutory deadline for passing the budget is April 15. Just prior to that, we are going to have a 2-week recess, which shortens the amount of time we have to work.