

\$150 billion. That is a lot of money, isn't it?

Do you realize that once every 68 seconds in America someone is diagnosed with Alzheimer's? I didn't believe that when my staff told me. I checked it, and it is true. Once every 68 seconds an American is diagnosed with Alzheimer's, and we know what that means: for most of those patients, a steady decline to death, and for their families, the heartbreak of losing communication with someone they love and then caring for them in this state of Alzheimer's disease—once every 68 seconds.

Do you know what it costs us as a government to care for Alzheimer's victims last year, Medicare, Medicaid? We estimate \$200 billion.

Now, step back, a 5-percent growth in biomedical research over 10 years will cost \$150 billion. What if that research could find a way to delay the onset of Alzheimer's for months—maybe for years—and, God willing, find a cure.

What I am saying is whether it is Alzheimer's, cancer, heart disease, diabetes, each and every one of these is praying for and depending on medical research to give Americans who are stricken a fighting chance. It is up to us. We have to make that decision.

I would take this question to the Iowa caucus, to the New Hampshire primary, any State, any city in the Nation, and ask the crowd that you would assemble, that anyone assembles, what do you think is a high priority? Do you think biomedical research by our government is a high priority?

I know the answer, because every one of us lives in fear that someone we love will be diagnosed with a serious illness. You know the first questions you would ask that doctor: Doctor, is there a medicine, is there a surgery, is there something I can do, something that can be done?

And you pray, pray to God, that the doctor says: Yes, we have a new medication in clinical trials at the NIH. It is very promising, and this may be the answer for your son, your daughter, your wife, your mother, and your father. That is what this comes down to—real life, real family challenges.

The American Cures Act I introduced a couple of years ago sets this 5 percent funding goal. I have talked to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and asked them to join me. This shouldn't be a Democratic idea, not a Republican idea. This is as basic as it gets.

The next great scientific and medical breakthroughs will be discovered by researchers if we fund the research, but it isn't just a matter of biomedical research at the NIH. I had a visit with Department of Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz, and over breakfast we talked about the American Cures Act.

He said: Senator, let me put in a word here. Do you know who develops the technology for diagnostic evaluations—whether it is MRIs, PET scans, and things of that nature? Do you know who develops the technology for

the application of radiation therapy for cancer victims? A lot of it is done right here at the Department of Energy.

He awakened me to the fact that we think about NIH automatically in biomedical research—and we should. There is more to the story.

So I have really reached out and said: American Cures Act, 5 percent real growth for biomedical isn't enough. We need 5 percent growth when it comes to innovation, the next breakthrough when it comes to diagnosing breast cancer at an early stage, treating cancers with radiation, other things. The American Innovation Act would provide an annual budget increase of 5 percent for the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy Office of Science, the Department of Defense science and technology programs, the National Institute of Standards and Technology Scientific and Technical Research, and the NASA Science Directorate.

You say to yourself, can we afford it? I will say what I know. I know that when we embark on scientific research of real value, it not only can cure disease, in the process it will create a company. It will create many companies. It could create many jobs in the right fields and develop our economy in the right way.

We are debating this now on the floor of the Senate. They are not debating it in Beijing. They have decided they are going to pass us. The Chinese have embarked on a medical program in medical research and other research, determined—within the next 20 years—to pass the United States.

Will we let that happen? The men and women of the Senate will make that decision, and the men and women of the House and the President.

All told, the American Innovations Act would invest \$100 billion over 10 years; the American Cures Act, \$150 billion—\$250 billion.

How much money will we spend on our budget in that 10-year period of time? Somewhere in the range of \$18 trillion to \$20 trillion. This is a tiny, little decimal point, but what a difference it could make.

Some of my colleagues talk about burdening our children and grandchildren with debt. I agree. We shouldn't. But the way to reduce our deficit and grow our economy is not by killing research and innovation. It pays for itself many times over. We have cut the budget deficit by two-thirds since the start of the recession which we just went through 7 or 8 years ago.

Now it is time to close the innovation deficit. In the last years of Jonas Salk's life, he was searching for an AIDS vaccine. He didn't need to do that. His place in history was assured, but Jonas Salk wasn't content to rest on past achievement. After all, he was an American, and when his early efforts failed, he was undeterred. Jonas Salk said: "You can only fail if you stop too soon."

This is a decisive moment of a historic opportunity for America and for Congress. We must continue to invest in basic science and research in order to reap the rewards of decades of work by the best scientific and medical minds of the world. The only way we can fail is by stopping too soon.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TAX DAY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, it has been said that April is the cruelest month. I think that pretty much captures how Americans feel as tax day approaches each year. This year, Americans will spend 114 days working to pay their Federal, State, and local taxes. In other words, Americans may have submitted their Federal tax returns or be getting ready to submit them tonight, but they are still not done working off their taxes. In fact, Americans won't start earning a dollar for themselves until April 25, almost one-third of the way through the year.

Americans spend 6.1 billion hours every year trying to comply with the Tax Code. That is an average of 19 hours for every man, woman, and child in the United States or an average of 76 hours for a family of four. Almost half of small businesses spend more than \$5,000 each year on tax compliance; that is \$5,000 on top of their tax bill.

Paying taxes is never going to be on the top of Americans' list of favorite activities, but it doesn't have to be the torturous process it has become. The Tax Code takes too much time to comply with, and it takes too much money from hard-working Americans.

Comprehensive tax reform is long overdue. Unfortunately, instead of tax reform, under the Obama administration Americans have just gotten more taxes. The President's health care law created or raised taxes to the tune of more than \$1 trillion over the first decade. Several of those taxes have hit families making less than \$250,000 a year, despite the President's campaign pledge not to raise taxes on families making less than \$250,000.

Let's take the ObamaCare medical device tax. Thanks to this tax, families are now facing higher prices on life-saving medical equipment such as pacemakers and insulin pumps. ObamaCare taxes are also driving up prices for families on essential drugs such as EpiPens and asthma medications. Other ObamaCare taxes are costing American families in other ways.

The ObamaCare employer mandate tax is discouraging employers from expanding and hiring, which means fewer

jobs and opportunities for American workers. Then there is the individual mandate tax that last year began hitting American families without government-approved insurance. For 2015, the individual mandate tax penalty is \$325 per person or 2 percent of household income, whichever is greater. In 2016, that tax penalty will rise to \$695 per person or 2½ percent of household income, whichever is greater.

But that is not all ObamaCare is bringing to tax season. This year, a full half of Americans receiving ObamaCare health insurance subsidies discovered they have to pay back some or all of their subsidies because they didn't estimate their income correctly. Ultimately, just 4 percent of households receiving subsidies had the correct subsidy advanced to their insurance companies. Unfortunately, the confusion and mistakes are par for the course for ObamaCare. The administration apparently finds the law so confusing that it sent out incorrect ObamaCare forms to more than 800,000 people. Yet the administration wants us to believe ObamaCare is somehow working.

We need to repeal this broken law and its trillion dollars' worth of taxes, and we need to reform our bloated Tax Code. We need to cut rates for families so that Americans can spend more of the year working for themselves and less of the year working for the Federal Government. We need to cut rates for businesses, both large and small. The U.S. currently has the highest corporate tax rate in the developed world. That puts American businesses at a huge disadvantage compared to their foreign competitors, and American workers suffer the consequences—lower wages and fewer opportunities. Reforming both corporate and individual tax rates would go a long way toward making American businesses more competitive and opening new opportunities and higher paying jobs for American workers.

Of course, any tax reform measure should include reforms to the IRS. From mishandled customer service to the Agency's most serious offenses—the First Amendment violations involving the deliberate targeting of groups for extra scrutiny based on their political beliefs—this Agency, the IRS, is long overdue for reform.

The IRS Commissioner himself, John Koskinen, was quoted in Monday's Washington Post as saying: "We certainly can't afford to have taxpayer service be any worse than it is, although it is hard to imagine it being much worse than it is." That is a quote from the IRS Commissioner himself. When even the IRS Commissioner admits the Agency's taxpayer services can't get much worse, that is a signal the Agency is ripe for reform.

TRADE PROMOTION AUTHORITY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, before I close, I would like to take a moment to talk about what I think is a bright spot

for our economy, and that is bipartisan trade promotion authority. Previous free- and fair-trade agreements have been a boon to the economy, expanding opportunities for American workers and giving American farmers, such as many of those I represent in South Dakota, and manufacturers access to new markets for their goods. Nearly every one of those trade agreements was negotiated and enacted using trade promotion authority.

The idea behind trade promotion authority is very simple: Congress sets negotiating priorities for the administration and requires the administration to consult with Congress during that negotiating process. In return, Congress promises a simple up-or-down vote on the legislation instead of a lengthy amendment process that could leave the final agreement looking nothing like what was negotiated. That up-or-down vote is the key. That is what gives our trading partners the confidence to put their best offers on the table, which allows for a successful conclusion of negotiations.

Trade promotion authority expired in 2007. Republicans have been trying to get it reauthorized ever since. Currently, the administration is negotiating two key trade agreements—the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the United States-European Union trade agreement—that are unlikely to be concluded in the near future unless trade promotion authority is finally renewed. These agreements will expand opportunities for American workers and open new markets for American goods. A bipartisan reauthorization of trade promotion authority will help bring those agreements to a speedy conclusion, and that will be good news for American workers and American businesses.

The challenges facing our Nation are best solved when Members of both parties come together to find solutions for the American people. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues on trade promotion authority and other issues that will grow our economy, create better paying jobs for American workers, and increase the take-home pay of middle-income families in this country.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, yesterday, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee reported the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015. To the surprise of many people, including me, it was unanimously reported, which makes me begin to wonder just how much Iran nuclear agreement review there will be in this act.

I was an original cosponsor of the Corker-Menendez bill that would give Congress and the American people a voice in what is likely to be the most significant nuclear arms agreement in

this decade. I think the likelihood, as we move toward the agreement, as it appears to be structured, is that it won't be able to contain the desire of other people in the neighborhood—and maybe in other places in the world but certainly in the neighborhood—to be just as capable of producing a nuclear weapon as we allow Iran to be.

Supporting this bill does mean that Congress really gives the opportunity for these negotiations to advance, not Congress putting the brakes on these negotiations. Specifically, the bill would give Congress the opportunity to review and weigh in on a deal that has already been made. It does appear to prohibit the administration from removing sanctions while Congress reviews and while Congress votes on a final deal, if that is what Congress decides to do. It doesn't require Congress to vote, as I read it, but I look forward to having the people who unanimously voted for this in the Foreign Relations Committee explain how it really does involve the Congress as the Constitution would suggest the Senate would be involved. This does permit removal of sanctions only if the Congress passes a joint resolution approving the agreement, I have been told.

The new bill reported out of committee makes the following changes in the original bill. Under the new bill, the congressional review period isn't going to be 60 days, it would be 30 days. The new bill removes the provision requiring the administration to certify to Congress that Iran is not providing material support to terrorists plotting against the homeland or against U.S. entities.

We are continuing to be told: Well, that is a different topic. I don't know why that is a different topic at all. A nuclear-capable Iran that is supporting terrorism is obviously more dangerous than a nuclear-capable Iran that is not supporting terrorism. The weapon that you can see being built, the weapon that would compare to weapons we may have built, and other powers, in the past was perhaps not nearly as dangerous as the weapon being built that could be used by some terrorist.

This bill does appear to give Congress the ability to intervene but only to intervene after the parties have made the deal. I am not particularly offended by that. If this were a real treaty, the administration would obviously be negotiating that treaty and then would bring the treaty to the Senate for approval, as the Constitution requires and as has happened over and over again on treaties involving nuclear capacity, nuclear ability, nuclear build-up, or nuclear build-down. That is not a new thing for the Senate to deal with, but apparently nobody in the administration wants this to be this kind of treaty. Now, there is, apparently, a way to weigh in before it is implemented but in a way that I think we are going to have to look at very carefully if and when that legislation comes to the floor.