

ago, 600 years ago, various crusades—equate the crusades with what is happening now and somehow suggest that these people are just temporarily misguided. These people are not temporarily misguided; these people are about an evil purpose. They killed fellow members of their religion because they believed those people didn't perfectly reflect their own religion.

This is an issue we need to be concerned about. We have to have a strategy. We need clarity. We need commitment. If we are going to destroy this threat, we really have to be committed to destroy this terrorist threat.

I plan to press the administration, as many others will, on that question of, What is your plan? The President's nominee for Secretary of Defense couldn't explain the plan. That is a vote we are going to have later today. I don't intend to vote for that nominee today. We have already had three Secretaries of Defense in this Presidency who have been incredibly frustrated, obviously and visibly frustrated and willing to talk about their frustrations—at least the two Secretaries who have already left—of not knowing how to deal with a White House that wants to run the military in the most specific ways rather than saying: Here is our goal. What is the best way to meet that goal?

We have had that already. We don't need another Secretary of Defense who doesn't understand what the plan is and can't communicate that plan to either the Congress or the country or our friends around the world.

The Congress doesn't understand what the President is trying to do. The administration can't explain what the President is trying to do. Our enemies are emboldened by the fact that we can't explain what we are trying to do, and our friends wonder what we are trying to do.

In so many cases—I remember the great speech by the President of Ukraine at a joint session of Congress last year where basically he said: Thank you for the food. Thank you for the blankets. But we can't fight the Russians with blankets. We can't fight the terrorists without a strategy. We can't fight the terrorists without a commitment to the goal.

The document the President sent to us this week was carefully worded to meet all kinds of political constituencies. It is not carefully worded in a way that meets the threat of radical Islamic terrorism. The Jordanians understand this. People in the neighborhood understand this. People in Europe seem to have a better understanding of it than we do. They all want to see some level of commitment by the United States of America, and I would like to hear what that commitment is.

I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY FUNDING

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I heard the remarks earlier today about how we need to move forward with the Department of Homeland Security funding bill without any reaction to the President's Executive actions of last year. One way to see if that would really meet the test of the Senate is to move forward, to have the debate.

Our friends on the other side are unwilling to debate this. Why would that be? Many of them disagree with the actions of the President of last November. Enough of them certainly disagreed to have 60 votes on the Senate floor that would pass a bill to reverse those actions. Maybe not everybody agrees with everything, but we had more amendment votes on the Senate floor 2 weeks ago on 2 different days—each of 2 different days—than we had all of last year. The majority leader has shown a commitment to let Senators be heard. If they want to improve what the House sent over, let's debate it. If they want to improve what the House sent over, let's hear what those improvements are.

Later today I am joining my colleagues from the Senate Steering Committee and the Republican Study Committee to discuss why Senate Democrats continue their efforts to filibuster this funding bill, to not have a debate on this funding bill. In the last Congress we were often accused of not being willing to end debate; seldom were we accused of not being willing to have the debate. Our argument was, how can we end debate when we have had no amendments? We have not been able to be heard on how we would like to change this bill. Why would we end that debate?

Seldom were we accused of not wanting to go to debate. Several times that was the case when it was clear that nothing was going to happen and the debate was all about politics.

This is a debate about funding part of the government that is so essential that if funding is not there, almost all of the employees show up anyway. They are considered essential. They need a paycheck, just as families all over America do. We are going to see to it that that happens. These are essential employees.

This is not a situation where we can just decide we don't need to have the debate. Our friends on the other side can't continue to think that the debate only happens and amendments only happen in the Senate if there are provisions with which they agree. Maybe they just don't want to explain why the President said 22 times he couldn't take the action he took in November. That is a lot of times, even by political

standards. Twenty-two times saying he can't do something and then figuring out a way he can do it is a pretty extraordinary event.

So we need to have this debate. Frankly, unless we engage in the debate, we won't really ever know what is going to happen with the debate.

I think it is time to move forward. I hope Senate Democrats will work with us. If they want to offer amendments, I am more than happy to vote on their amendments. I think the bill the House sent over is work product we should be pursuing. We should be moving forward with it. Seldom is there legislation that can't possibly be improved, but it can't be improved if we won't talk about it. This is not an option. This is an issue we eventually have to deal with.

Let's have the debate on why it now doesn't matter that the President said 22 times he wasn't going to take an action and then took it. If there are provisions in the House bill our friends on the other side don't like, let's hear what they are and vote on those issues and see what happens then.

We need to continue our efforts to move to this funding bill. I hope we will still engage in this debate before the end of the month and give this the attention it deserves.

We should not assume that any legislation that comes to the floor is so perfect, it can't be improved. In fact, the tradition for appropriations bills of the Senate and the House has always been that any Member could challenge anything—until about 7 years ago when suddenly no Member could challenge anything. Let's get back to the way this work is supposed to be done.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I also ask unanimous consent to exceed—I know morning business expires in 3 or 4 minutes. I doubt I will be speaking for more than 10 minutes, but for extra time in morning business, I ask unanimous consent.

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

#### BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I rise today to address what I call an issue of public responsibility. More specifically, I rise to address the responsibility of both the legislative and the executive branches to deal with our Nation's out of control deficit spending. Unfortunately, the President has shown little interest in the dire fiscal situation facing our Nation, which makes it all the more important for Congress to do so. Without Presidential leadership, it is

now Congress's duty to step up and take the lead.

We have an obligation to be straightforward and honest with the American people about the financial challenges America faces. There was a furor over our continuing plunge into debt and deficit starting in 2009 and 2010 as we saw the spending explode with stimulus plans that didn't work and other policies that continued to drive us into debt. Unfortunately, that level of intensity and displeasure over all that was happening has subsided, but the problem hasn't gone away. It needs to be addressed, and it needs to be addressed now.

As I said, we have an obligation as Members of this body and of the Congress to be honest and straightforward with the American people about where we stand and what we will do about it.

I received a letter from one of my constituents, Steven of Martinsville, Indiana. Steven wrote to me to describe his concerns about our national debt and spending. Let me quote from his letter:

As of today, the outstanding national debt is over \$18 trillion. That is an overly exorbitant amount of money.

It certainly is, Steven. You are right. It is an exorbitant amount of money—one we can hardly even get our minds around in terms of what \$18 trillion means.

Steven continued:

Therefore, I would like to know our options in America.

I think we as elected officials have an obligation to list those options and describe what we would do about it if we had the opportunity and the support from the President, which is not forthcoming, but perhaps it will be. Surely even the executive branch and the President have to understand the situation we are in and the consequences of not doing something about it.

I am sure my colleagues received many letters and information from constituents who are concerned about the health of our Nation, from our mounting Federal debt, to our management—or I suppose I could say mismanagement of the Federal budget. Our constituents want to know what we, as their elected officials, are going to do about it.

What is plain as day to Steven, unfortunately, is not so clear here in Washington because the President says we don't have a spending problem, we have a revenue problem. I can't go home to people in Indiana and tell them that we need to tax more because government is growing and needs their money, and do so without derision coming back my way because people are being taxed to death. This President has an obsession with solving every conceivable problem by asking for more revenue and more taxes. The revenue is increasing; yet we have not placed the necessary spending restraints to control this ever-growing dilemma of deficit spending.

I think there is only one real solution to our problem—a solution that is

absolutely necessary because we literally have tried everything else and come up short—and that solution is for this body to pass a balanced budget constitutional amendment. That is why I am cosponsoring an amendment to the United States Constitution that forces the Federal Government to balance its budget, limits the growth of government spending, and that requires a supermajority to pass any tax increase. Without these measures, we will not successfully deal with this problem.

This is not a new idea. I served here in 1995 and again in 1997. I voted for a balanced budget amendment to limit spending and require the Federal Government to balance its checkbook. Both times, the Senate came one vote short of the necessary two-thirds to pass the constitutional amendment and send it to the States for ratification. One vote—one Member out of 100—could have voted with us, and we would have put ourselves on the path towards a balanced budget. We would not have begun to have the problems of ever-increasing debt, ever-increasing new taxes to cover that debt, and constriction in terms of spending for national priorities, such as defense and health research. Unfortunately, it didn't. When the amendment failed in 1997, our nation's debt stood at \$5.36 trillion. Our debt is about three and a half times larger today. If we had had the political will to act then, we would not be faced with the financial challenges that exist today.

By passing a balanced budget amendment, we can send to the States not just a message that we are serious about addressing our fiscal woes, but that we are giving them a voice, we are giving people a voice, and we are giving them the power to hold Federal spending accountable. It would be a unique opportunity to right a wrong and begin restoring our fiscal house by making the Federal Government accountable for its spending.

In March of 1997 I stood on this very floor and warned about the dangers of operating outside our means. I said it then, and I would like to say it again today. I am quoting from what I said in 1997:

There is no reliable check on this process of intergenerational theft. It is politically prudent, even popular, and this political calculation will not change, will never permanently change without some kind of systematic institutional counterweight, without some measure to give posterity a voice in our affairs. Nothing, in my view, will permanently change until the accumulation of popular debt is a violation of our oath to the Constitution. Perverse incentives of the current system will not be altered until the system itself is altered, until our political interests are balanced by the weighty words of a constitutional amendment. It would be a much needed balance.

We need to come to this body at the beginning of each session and put our left hand on the Bible and our right hand forward and swear to uphold the Constitution, which would involve re-

sponsible spending to keep us from plunging into disastrous consequences.

I mentioned earlier that Steven from Martinsville, IN, sent me this letter. What I did not mention is that Steven is a Boy Scout working toward his Citizenship in the Nation merit badge, which teaches Scouts how to become active citizens who are aware of and grateful for their liberties and their rights.

We all know that Boy Scouts take this oath—the oath to be trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, brave, clean, reverent, and thrifty. If we just take one of those principles, thrifty, and apply it to our governing, then America would be in a better place.

We cannot fail Steven, and we cannot fail his generation. His share of the debt will amount to more than \$62,000 in 10 years. Let's not keep shifting the hard choices to our children and grandchildren. Let's not deny them the opportunity at the American dream that all of us in my generation have enjoyed. The opportunity that comes with responsible spending and a responsible government. Opportunity that comes to few people in the world. We are so privileged as Americans to have that, and we are denying that to the future. By passing this balanced budget amendment, we can honor the moral tradition of sacrificing for posterity instead of asking posterity to sacrifice for us.

With that, I yield the floor.

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#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

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#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

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#### NOMINATION OF ASHTON B. CARTER TO BE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Ashton B. Carter, of Massachusetts, to be Secretary of Defense.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 2 p.m. will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

The Senator from Maine.

(The remarks of Ms. COLLINS and Ms. KLOBUCHAR pertaining to the submission of S. Res. 74 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Submitted Resolutions.")

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.