

been reduced by more than two-thirds—I think it may have even been close to three-quarters—and that is good.

There are things we need to do for further deficit reduction.

No. 1, we need to really consider what we do with our entitlement programs. The Bowles-Simpson Commission suggested that we make some changes and that we make them in ways which do not harm older people and which will save these programs for our children and grandchildren. I think that is very important, and that is one thing we need to do.

No. 2, we need some additional revenues. We actually had four balanced budgets in a row during the last 4 years of the Clinton administration. If you look at revenues as a percentage of GDP in those 4 years, it was 20 percent. Revenues as a percentage of GDP for the 4 years we had a balanced budget was 20 percent. When you look at spending as a percentage of GDP during those 4 years, the last 4 years of the Clinton administration, it was 20 percent. During that time we had a balanced budget. In fact, we had a little surplus. But all of that got away from us in the 8 years that followed. After we had a change in administrations, the deficit piled up to \$1.4 trillion. Well, we have been ratcheting it down, and now we are recovering from the worst recession since the Great Depression. Can we do better than that? Sure we can do better than that.

In terms of deficit reduction, entitlement reform actually saves money, save these programs for our kids and our grandchildren, and doesn't harm old people and poor people.

The third thing we need is tax reform that generates revenues and hopefully reduces some rates, especially on the corporate side, where we are out of step with the rest of the world.

The fourth thing we need to do is look at everything we do in order to find ways to save money. I will always remember a woman who came to one of my townhall meetings early in my time as a Congressman years ago, and her message to me, which I have never forgotten, was "Congressman Carper, I don't mind paying for additional taxes; I just don't want you to waste my money." That is what she said. "I don't mind paying for additional taxes; I just don't want you to waste my money." I think most people in this country feel that way.

As it turns out, one of the jobs of GAO—the Government Accountability Office—as a watchdog on spending for us is every 2 years they provide to the Congress a high-risk list of ways we are wasting money. When Tom Coburn and I led the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, we used that as kind of our shopping list that we used to offer changes in spending and changes in revenues—especially in government collection—that would actually further reduce the deficit. We have taken action on a bunch of the

ideas from GAO, and we need to find additional steps to take that provide part of the blueprint. Every major agency has inspectors general, and many of them regularly give us recommendations on how to save more money. Those reports should not just go up on a shelf somewhere but should be an action plan for us. So there is work for all of us to do.

The last thing I will say is that health care costs as a percentage of GDP in my time as Governor—actually, after I stepped down as Governor in 2001—which was pretty flat during the mid-to-late 1990s, started to rise again and continued to rise until right around 2010, 2011. At that time health care costs as a percentage of GDP in this country had risen to 18 percent.

When I ask a friend of mine how he is doing, he says: Compared to what? Well, how about comparing it to Japan? In Japan health care costs as a percentage of GDP are about 8 percent. We were 18 percent and they are at 8 percent. They get better results, longer life expectancies, and lower rates of infant mortality. They cover everybody.

Four or 5 years ago, we had 40 million people going to bed without health care coverage at all, and we didn't get better results and we were spending 18 percent of GDP. The good news is that since the Affordable Care Act—I wrote parts of it, and I am proud of the part I worked on. But there are things we need to change, and my hope is that some day we get to a point in time where Democrats and Republicans, instead of just trying to kill and get rid of it, will say that there are some good things in this legislation and some good things that will be coming, and one of the good things that is coming is that health care costs as a percentage of GDP are not 18 percent anymore. They are coming down. The impact on deficit reduction is actually quite positive because of this legislation.

#### NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, those are some things I didn't plan to say but I felt compelled to say as a warmup to what I really wanted to say, and that is to talk about the agreement we struck with Iran and some of the things that have been happening since then with us, the United States, and five other nations.

Over the past couple of weeks, the Obama administration's decision to engage with Iran, along with these other five nations, through diplomacy instead of military action has faced key tests. The results are in, and the agreement that we struck—the United States, the Brits, the Germans, the French, the Chinese, the Russians, and the Iranians—appears to be working thus far, and, God willing, we may actually be on our way to being safe as a result.

This test began on the high seas 2 weeks ago when the United States and Iran faced a crisis that could have

ended tragically. Two U.S. Navy vessels carrying a total of 10 crewmembers strayed into Iran's territorial waters. They were detained by Iran, and as many of us know, they appeared on Iranian television. The American vessels were somewhere they should not have been. It was a mistake.

As a former naval flight officer who served 5 years in a hot war in Southeast Asia and another 18 years—right up to end of the Cold War—as a P3 aircraft mission commander, I know this is a mistake we never want to make. Defense Secretary Ash Carter acknowledged that the error had been made, and the sailors were released unharmed within 24 hours of being detained. Flashbacks of past hostage crises and destabilizing tensions were on all of our minds as we watched this story unfold. However, thanks to a more cooperative and productive diplomatic relationship with Iran, the sailors were released within 24 hours.

As the week came to a close, we saw additional encouraging validations that the administration's Iran strategy is beginning to bear fruit. Following months of the most intrusive nuclear inspections in history, international weapons inspectors concluded that Iran had indeed followed through on its pledge in the nuclear deal to dismantle the parts of its nuclear program that were clearly not intended for peaceful purposes.

The International Atomic Energy Agency certified that Iran had reduced its stockpile of enriched uranium by 98 percent and that the remaining uranium was only enriched to levels consistent with peaceful energy uses. The inspectors certified that nearly 15,000 centrifuges for enriching uranium have been dismantled. That leaves Iran with only its least sophisticated centrifuges, which can be used solely for peaceful purposes. The inspectors revealed that a special reactor for producing the kind of plutonium needed for a nuclear bomb in Iran will produce no more. It has been filled with concrete instead. Finally, the nuclear watchdogs certified that the inspections and monitoring systems of Iran's nuclear facility and nuclear supply chain have been stood up to ensure Iran's compliance with the nuclear deal.

All of this happened much faster than most of us would have expected. It certainly happened faster than I expected it would. In fact, some critics of the nuclear deal said that Iran would never live up to the promises it had made—never. Yet, despite that skepticism, today we see an Iran that has taken irreversible steps to dismantle its nuclear weapons program in order to make good on its pledges.

Amid the nuclear deal's implementation, the United States achieved another diplomatic breakthrough with Iran—one that I and a number of my colleagues had a hand in.

The Iranians released five individuals—all dual U.S.-Iranian citizens—that they had been detaining in Iran

for some years. Their release was the result of intense diplomatic negotiations. Secretary Kerry and his team of negotiators worked overtime to secure their freedom. They deserve our appreciation and our thanks.

I had never forgotten about these Americans, and neither had my colleagues. Whenever we spoke or met with senior Iranian officials in recent years, we consistently called on them to release our unjustly detained citizens. The end result is that these Americans are free to rejoin their families in America instead of rotting in an Iranian prison.

The events and achievements that occurred during these 6 days were a remarkable validation that the Obama administration and those of us in Congress who voted to support the nuclear deal had made the right choice. But our challenges with Iran have not vanished—not by a long shot. Iran continues to support terrorist organizations like Hezbollah. Iraq props up the Assad regime in Syria. Iran tests and develops ballistic missiles in defiance of U.N. Security Council resolutions. Another American, former FBI agent Bob Levinson, disappeared 8 years ago in Iran, and the Iranian government needs to do all it can to help return him to his family or, if they can't do that—if he is no longer alive—at least help find out what happened to this American. Also, of course, Iran refuses to recognize Israel's right to even exist.

Addressing these problems with Iran will not be easy. They will require the same kind of intense negotiations and pressure that helped to bring about an end to Iran's nuclear weapons program and the release of the detained Americans. That means our relationship with Iran will not always be composed of carrots. There may very well be times when sticks are needed to try to convince that Nation's regime to change its behavior toward us and our allies, including Israel.

Perhaps no action better illustrates these dynamics than the United States' recent move to increase sanctions on Iran for its illegal testing of ballistic missiles—something that is a clear violation of the sanctions. At the same time that the U.S. was lifting nuclear sanctions on Iran as part of the nuclear deal, the Obama administration was leveling sanctions against 11 entities for their role in supporting Iran's ballistic missile program.

Addressing our challenges with Iran over the long term will also require this administration, along with future administrations and Congress, to adopt a forward-thinking foreign policy that looks beyond the rhetoric of Iran's current regime.

I have a chart here that I want to share with everyone tonight. It is a collage of photographs. I believe these photographs were taken in the aftermath of the decision to approve the agreement—a decision reached by the United States and our five negotiating

partners and the government of Iran. This is a collage of photographs that indicates the measure of joy the Iranian people are reacting to this successful negotiation with.

I just want to say Iran is little understood by most Americans. They have 78 million people there today. The average age of those people is under the age of 25—a lot like the young people we see in these photographs. For the most part, they are all educated. The lion's share of them don't remember the Iranian revolution of 1979 and the taking of American hostages at our embassy or the cruel Shah whom we supported until his ouster. This is a population, reflected in these photographs, that appears more focused on building Iran's troubled economy than pursuing antagonizing military activities favored by the Supreme Leader and by many of the Revolutionary Guard.

In the weeks ahead, this new generation of young Iranians will head to the polls—sometime in the month of February—to choose the country's next parliament, as well as an entity called its Council of Experts, which I believe is the body that will help to choose the next Supreme Leader of Iran. At stake for these Iranians is the choice between the policies of engagement and economic revival being vigorously pursued by President Rouhani, Foreign Minister Zarif, and their supporters, as opposed to the politics of antagonism and destabilization that are apparently favored by the Supreme Leader and many in the Revolutionary Guard.

We have seen photographs this week of President Rouhani meeting not just with Pope Francis—the first meeting between the leader of Iran and the Pope in close to 20 years—but also of his meetings throughout Europe, calling on countries, calling on businesses in order to try to solicit and pave the way for investments not in weaponry, not in aid to Hezbollah, but investments in roads, highways, and bridges—things that we need, but they need them a whole lot worse. Their roads, their highways and bridges, their airports and trains make ours look like the 21st century. They need to invest in those things.

They have a lot of oil. They have the ability to pump a lot more. I think they pump about 300,000 barrels a day. By the end of this year, they will have the ability to pump as much as 1 million barrels of oil a day, and they are not going to do that without enormous investments in their oil infrastructure. They have a great need to do that. These young people know that. That is where they would like to spend that money.

We should help make the upcoming parliamentary elections in February for these voters and others an easy choice. We should continue to show the people of Iran that their cooperation and their commitment to peace will be rewarded. How? With economic opportunity and the shedding of Iran's status as a pariah in the international community.

We ought to listen to these people. They are not much older than the pages who are sitting here in front of us this evening. They are interested in their country changing for the better. They are interested in reform. A number of them have relatives who live over here in our country, and there are a lot of Iranian Americans who live here. For the most part, they are very valued citizens, and people would be proud to call them Americans.

We need to listen to these young people who are calling for reform and who want to reconnect Iran to the international community. Frankly, it would be wise of us to do so for the sake of our security and for the sake of the security of our allies and for stability in the Middle East.

Mr. President, I see no one waiting to be recognized at this time.

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. SULLIVAN. 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. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for as much time as I may consume.

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

#### OVERREGULATION OF THE AMERICAN ECONOMY

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I rise in support of an amendment that I am hoping will be part of the Energy bill currently being debated on the floor and being shepherded through the Senate by my colleague from the great State of Alaska, Senator MURKOWSKI.

I commend Senator MURKOWSKI, the chair of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, for the bill she has worked on for months—incredible hard work. It is great to have her as the chair of the committee, certainly for Alaska but for the entire country. States such as the Presiding Officer's recognize how important American energy is for all our citizens.

One of the many positive aspects of the bill we have been debating is that it is focused on cleaning up old regulations, cleaning up outdated programs, getting rid of some of the things we don't need.

The amendment that this Senator would like to offer as part of the Energy bill is based on a bill I recently introduced called the RED Tape Act of 2015. The R-E-D in RED Tape Act stands for Regulations Endanger Democracy Act, and this Senator believes that is the case. The onslaught of regulations are not only threatening our economy but are actually threatening our form of government. That is why I am proposing a simple one-in, one-out bill that will cap Federal regulations—a simple commonsense approach to