

I am glad the Senate is addressing the threat posed by North Korea. A similar version of the North Korea sanctions bill that we are addressing this week recently passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 418 to 2. I hope we will see similar bipartisan support for the bill here in the Senate. We should not compromise the national security of the United States with disputes between our political parties. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle feel the same and will join me in moving this bill forward.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

BUDGET REFORM

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, today the President of the United States unveiled the last budget of his Presidency: \$4.1 trillion. Of that, \$1.1 trillion is discretionary spending, which is the amount Congress will discuss over the next few months.

It is no big secret that Presidential budgets typically are dead on arrival—this one especially so, obviously, as it is the last one of the President's term. It is a requirement of the 1974 Budget Act. The President turns in his budget by the first Monday of February. It is actually now into the second week. It is a week late, but it is closer to on time than the budgets of other Presidents have been in the last few years.

There are a lot of wish list items in the President's budget. It also includes about \$3.4 trillion in new taxes over the next 10 years. It increases spending by \$2.5 trillion over the next 10 years, including next year. The challenge in the President's spending plan is that he increases spending so much that we also continue to increase the deficit, the debt, and our interest payments.

This body should realize that on the current track, the Congressional Budget Office and the President's budget that he released today forecast that within the next 10 years, the United States of America will spend more on interest on our debt than we spend on national defense. I want everyone to soak that in. Within 10 years, the Federal taxpayer will spend more on interest on our debt—our debt payments—than we spend on national defense.

When the President came into office, there was \$10.6 trillion in total debt. The President's budget lays out a plan that by the end of his budget, there will be \$27.4 trillion in total debt. This is an issue for us, and it continues to accelerate. And until this body and until the House and until the White House agree this is a problem, it will not be solved.

I don't want to say this flippantly; the President and I have had this conversation. He does not believe that increasing deficits—that is, overspending what we bring in—is a problem. He believes, as he has shared with me and with the American people publicly, that if the government overspends a little bit, that stimulates the economy. Well, that might be true in some economic formula, but when our interest payments are larger than total what we spend for defense, we are in a spiral that we cannot sustain.

We cannot keep saying we will add more debt every year and there is no reckoning for that. Our total debt right now exceeds our gross domestic product. Literally, if we took from every single American in the entire country all of their income for the entire year we could not pay off our debt.

We are very much at a tipping point. The problem Congress faces is Congress never seems to act until we have to, and, in this time, in an economic crisis, when we have to, it is too late. How do we get on top of that? How do we stop bragging about how much the deficit has been cut and actually start reducing our debt? Many Americans don't hear the difference between the debt and the deficit because they don't live in this world of all of these different terms. Deficit is how much we overspend in any one year; debt is the accumulation of all of those deficits.

Washington continues to talk about how in the last 6 years we have cut the deficit by \$1 trillion. And that is a good thing, but the problem is that in the last 10 years, the debt has also doubled as deficits are still so large every single year, and that is a problem.

So what do we do with this? I would say there are multiple things. No. 1, we are not going to get out of this in any one time period. This body needs to understand that this is not a car payment we are paying off. This is a really big jumbo mortgage. We are not going to pay this off in 1 year, and we are not going to fix it in one stroke. This is going to take multiple years of picking away at this.

I have reminded several of my colleagues of one sobering fact: If we were to balance our budget and set this 10-year time period to actually balance the budget, if the next year after the balanced budget we had a \$50 billion surplus as a nation, it would take 460 years in a row of \$50 billion surpluses to pay off our debt. For twice as long as we have been a country, if we had a \$50 billion surplus every year, we could pay off our debt. At some point we have to admit this is a really big issue.

CBO, the Congressional Budget Office, as all of us know in this room, continues to rattle us and remind us that this debt is continuing to grow and we do not have the resources to do it. For the first time since 2009, our deficit will rise again next year to \$544 billion. That is up 24 percent from just this last fiscal year. As we continue to have more individuals who retire and

use Medicare and Social Security, which they have set aside their entire life to go into, and as that number continues to rise and as discretionary spending continues to stay fairly capped, we are not getting on top of the big issues that we face.

Where do we go from here? In 1974 this Congress created the Congressional Budget Act, which set up the process of how we would actually do our budget every year. It is a very interesting process with the House and Senate passing budgets, putting them together, going through the process and getting everything to the President. All the timing and everything was set up with appropriations bills and how they would be done with all the deadlines. Interestingly, since 1979, the Congressional Budget Act, in the way that it was set up, has only worked two times—twice since 1979. Would anyone else admit that there is a problem with that setup? Coming out of Watergate in 1974, they wanted more transparency and an open process doing the budget. So they created this process that is so cumbersome that since 1979 it has only worked twice.

To give more up-to-date details, in the last 10 years we should have passed 118 appropriations bills. Of the 118 appropriations bills, only 7 of those individual bills were passed on time. We have a problem just in basic process.

So allow this Senator to just throw out a few ideas to recommend to this body that we consider. If we are going to fix our debt and deficit, we have to look at the process of executing our budget to fix it.

Here are a few thoughts. A biennial budget—if we don't do a budget every year, we should do a budget every 2 years. We are dealing with trillions of dollars. We should do a little bit of advanced planning. We should be able to do that at least 2 years in advance to be able to lay out how we are actually going to do the spending. We could do appropriations every single year to be able to provide the accountability, but at least the major budget process we should do every 2 years.

We should get rid of the budget gimmicks that dominate this body in how we "balance our budget." Budget gimmicks such as pension smoothing, corporate timing shifts, and all of our favorites—CHIMPS, or changes in mandatory programs, which everyone outside of this city thinks is a monkey, and everyone inside this city knows it is a great budgeting technique.

Here is how some of these work. Here is an example from October's budget agreement. A pension payment acceleration in section 502 changed the due date for pension premiums from October 15, 2025, to September 15, 2025, in order to get \$2.3 billion into the ten-year window. Now what just changed there? They moved the payment time 30 days forward and so that is when it is due. Since they moved it 30 days forward 10 years from now, suddenly that is another \$2 billion into the Federal

budget. If our Federal budget was not 10 years, but 10 years and 2 weeks, it would have been \$2 billion short. Because they moved the payment over a month and made it earlier, suddenly the budget picked up \$2 billion. It is not real. It is a gimmick.

There are the changes in mandatory programs that go out, such as the Crime Victims Fund. That is a fund of money that is expected to be spent, but should we actually not spend part of it, they will say: Great, we can take that part we were “expected to spend” and actually spend it this year. Then guess what; next year you spend it again, and next year you spend it again. It is a gimmick. That should be struck. We shouldn’t have gimmicks like that. Those things make Congress look good but don’t actually deal with our deficit and debt. There are rules that are internal that need to be fixed. We need to get real numbers and be able to have agreeable real numbers.

Right now there is a big argument all the time saying: How does the budget balance against the President’s budget—this particular baseline and that particular baseline? How about this: We have a lot of programs that have not been authorized—some of them for more than a decade—though we continue to allocate money for them every single year. Authorizing programs as we do for national defense every single year is important, and we should actually do the work with that to be able to bring bills to the floor and to be able to get it done.

We have reports from the GAO and from the IG that come out every year showing waste, yet many of those no one ever acts on. Three folks I see on the floor right now—Senator FLAKE and Senator MCCAIN from Arizona and my office—have all put out waste reports in the past 5 months detailing billions of dollars in waste. We can identify these areas, and the inspector general’s office and the GAO can identify these areas. We need to set a process in place to actually solve those issues. Then we can do more than talk about it. We can move it from just a messaging moment to solutions on our debt and our deficit.

I recommend a measure such as the Government Shutdown Prevention Act that says we don’t have a government shutdown. I understand some are very romantic about government shutdowns and what they would accomplish. Government shutdowns always cost more money for the taxpayer than they save. They cost a tremendous amount of turmoil in the Federal workforce and multiple places.

There is an easier way for us to handle this. Congress only acts when we have to. When we have a government shutdown, we suddenly have to act. How about if we do something simple and straightforward, and we put in place something that at the end of the budget year, if we do not have a budget in place and do not have proper appropriations done, we have a short-term

continuing resolution for 30 days that automatically puts into place in all legislative offices and the Executive Office of the White House a funding haircut to create the incentive that we need to act? If 30 days later we still don’t have the appropriations done, the Executive Office of the White House, the House, and the Senate get another haircut, and we continue to press. There are ways that we can add pressure to ourselves that won’t actually damage what is happening in the rest of the Nation.

Why don’t we pass a balanced budget amendment, which we have talked about forever and which we voted on in 2011 and has not come up again? We will never get to some of these measures until Congress is compelled to do the right thing. Let’s put some processes in place beginning with our budget process, with real reform in how we do the budget and real structural changes to actually push this body to do what everyone outside of this body says needs to be done.

In the days ahead when we are spending more on interest than we are on national defense, this body should hang its head in shame. But before that occurs, we should fix it so that never happens and we get on top of our debt and deficit with a straightforward process that actually gets us back to work.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate in morning business and be allowed to complete my remarks, which won’t be too long.

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

WATERBOARDING

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, today is the 100th New Hampshire Presidential primary. Regardless of who wins, this is a celebration of our vibrant democracy of engaged citizens putting candidates to the test and demanding answers on the tough issues the next President will confront.

It is also another important step in choosing our next Commander in Chief, and the stakes couldn’t be higher. As we heard from the Director of National Intelligence this morning, the threats to our Nation are growing more diverse, more complex, and more dangerous. More than ever we need a Commander in Chief with a clear vision, a steady hand, sound judgment and confidence—not only in our Nation’s power but in the values and ideals that generations of American heroes have fought for and died defending.

That is why it has been so disappointing to see some Presidential candidates engaged in loose talk on the campaign trail about reviving waterboarding and other inhumane interrogation techniques. It might be easy to dismiss this bluster as cheap campaign rhetoric, but these state-

ments must not go unanswered because they mislead the American people about the realities of interrogation, how to gather intelligence, what it takes to defend our security, and at the most fundamental level, what we are fighting for as a nation and what kind of a nation we are.

It is important to remember the fact that these forms of torture not only failed their purpose to secure actionable intelligence to prevent further attacks on the United States and our allies, but they compromised our values, stained our national honor, and did little practical good. While some have shamefully sought to minimize the practice of waterboarding, it is clear to me that this practice, which is a simulated execution by drowning, amounts to torture as any reasonable person would define it and how the Geneva Conventions on the treatment of prisoners of war, of which we are signatories, define it.

The use of these methods by the United States was shameful and unnecessary because the United States has tried, convicted, and executed foreign combatants who employed methods of torture, including waterboarding, against American prisoners of war. Following World War II, Japanese generals were tried, convicted, and hung. One of the charges against them was that they practiced waterboarding. Contrary to assertions made by some of the defenders, it provided little useful intelligence to help us track down the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks or to prevent new attacks and atrocities.

This Senator knows from personal experience that the abuse of prisoners will produce more bad than good intelligence. I know that victims of torture will offer intentionally misleading information if they think their captors will believe it. I know they will say whatever they think their torturers will want them to say if they believe it will stop their suffering. Most of all, I know that the use of torture compromises that which most distinguishes us from our enemies—our belief that all people, even captured enemies, possess basic human rights that are protected by international conventions the United States not only joined but for the most part authored.

I understand that in the aftermath of the worst terrorist attacks on our homeland, those who approved harsh interrogation methods and those who used them were sincerely dedicated to securing justice for the victims of terrorist attacks and protecting Americans from further harm. I know that in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, many Americans feel again the grave urgency that we felt 15 years ago. But I dispute wholeheartedly that it was right for our Nation to use these interrogation methods then or that it is right for our Nation to use them now.

Waterboarding, as well as any other form of torture, is not in the best interest of justice, security or the ideals