

The other side has been criticizing the Trump administration for not having enough nominees at, for example, the State Department. To be honest, I think some of that criticism is fair. We need to get out more nominees. The White House needs to get out more Ambassadors, more Assistant Secretaries, and more Under Secretaries. But, as I have mentioned to my colleagues a couple of times, they can't have it both ways. They can't have it both ways. What do I mean by that? You can't say to the administration "Hey, you need more Ambassadors. You need more Assistant Secretaries. You need a Secretary of State to run our foreign policy" and then, when those people are nominated by the President, delay, delay, delay. That is having it both ways, particularly if it is a candidate like Mike Pompeo, who is very well qualified.

Another criticism from my colleagues on the other side of the aisle is that there is just too much chaos in the administration right now, too much chaos in foreign policy, domestically and internationally. There is some truth to that, also, I am not going to deny that. But part of the reason there have been challenges at the State Department is that this body has been slow-rolling confirmation of the nominations.

Again, you can't say "We don't want the chaos" and then talk about voting along party lines to derail the nomination of Mike Pompeo, because that will actually continue and create the kind of chaos that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are railing against and say they don't want.

Chaos in the national security and foreign policy personnel world—that is not what we need. Nobody should be for that. Nobody should be for that.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a Washington Post editorial from just a couple of days ago that simply reads "Confirm Mike Pompeo."

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From The Washington Post, Apr. 12, 2018]

CONFIRM MIKE POMPEO

(By Editorial Board)

Mike Pompeo's confirmation hearing to become secretary of state arrived at a moment when the Trump administration is grappling with a chaotic confluence of actual and looming foreign crises—including some of its own making. President Trump is contemplating military strikes against Syria while also pushing for a U.S. pullout; he has committed to attempting to negotiate a nuclear deal with North Korea while threatening to repudiate the nuclear pact with Iran. He is waging a trade war against China and Japan while counting on their strategic cooperation against the regime of Kim Jong Un. And he is doing all this with a badly depleted national security apparatus: Dozens of senior positions are vacant at the State Department, and the newly arrived national security adviser, John Bolton, has started with a purge of senior staff at the White House.

Mr. Pompeo, who has a reputation as a hawk and who in Congress relentlessly pur-

sued groundless attacks against Hillary Clinton's State Department, did his best on Thursday to be reassuring. He stressed that he favored diplomatic solutions with Iran and North Korea; he played down the likely consequences of a decision by Mr. Trump to scrap the Iran deal next month. Importantly, he promised to defend the State Department's budget and to quickly seek to fill its many vacant positions, which would be a welcome departure from the odd management style of the departed Rex Tillerson.

As has frequently been the case during the past year, it was not always clear if Mr. Trump and his nominee are in agreement on major issues. Mr. Pompeo was tough on Russia, saying conflicts with it were caused by "Russia's bad behavior"; Mr. Trump tweeted Wednesday that "much of the bad blood with Russia is caused by the Fake & Corrupt Russia Investigation." Mr. Pompeo acknowledged that sanctions against Vladimir Putin's regime had been inadequate and promised to "reset . . . deterrence." But Mr. Trump tweeted that there was "no reason" for poor relations and suggested the United States should aid the Russian economy and "stop the arms race."

In this, Mr. Pompeo sounded much like his predecessor Mr. Tillerson, who often pushed Mr. Trump to be tougher on Mr. Putin and to resist reflexive impulses to pull U.S. forces out of Afghanistan and Syria. On human rights, as in support for the State Department, Mr. Pompeo sounded like an improvement, saying "we should defend American values every place we go," including to allies such as Egypt. Democracy promotion, he said, "is an important tool of foreign policy"—an idea that neither Mr. Tillerson nor Mr. Trump has supported. Though he reiterated his opposition to gay marriage, Mr. Pompeo said he would defend the rights of LGBT people both in the State Department and abroad.

Democrats who pressed Mr. Pompeo on his record, including his questionable statements about Muslims, have legitimate concerns. But rejecting or delaying his nomination, as Mr. Trump juggles multiple crises without adequate counsel, probably would make an already parlous situation worse. Mr. Pompeo should be deployed to Foggy Bottom in the hope that he will fulfill his promise to revive and reassert U.S. diplomacy.

Mr. SULLIVAN. The Washington Post has not necessarily been a strong supporter of the Trump administration, but right here in their editorial, they are saying that the Senate needs to confirm Mike Pompeo.

They make the point that I am trying to make here in my remarks, which is that rejecting or delaying Pompeo's nomination as Mr. Trump juggles multiple crises around the world without adequate counsel would probably make an already parlous situation worse.

"Mike Pompeo should be deployed to Foggy Bottom"—that is the State Department—"in the hope that he will fulfill his promise to revive and reassert U.S. diplomacy." That is from the Washington Post article, and I think it is wise counsel for everybody here—Republicans, Democrats, all of us.

Bipartisanship is important to move things along in the Senate, whether it is the Coast Guard bill or well-qualified nominees in the national security world, and it has certainly been a U.S. tradition with regard to the Secretary

of State that not only goes back decades but centuries.

I am hoping that my colleagues sit down and talk to Mike Pompeo if they have issues with him, and raise them, but let's get to the floor, and let's confirm him as the Secretary of State because the State Department needs a well-qualified individual to run that important agency, and so does our country.

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

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

THE NATIONAL DEBT

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about a milestone that happened about 3 weeks ago.

We have a couple of interesting dates. April 15 just passed. We call it tax day. But it was another day. It was also the date we were supposed to complete the Senate budget for fiscal year 2019, which starts on October 1 of this year. Well, April 15 came, and the IRS deadline did indeed hit, but there was no budget completed. This is part of the dysfunction that people back home are so upset about. I want to talk about that today, but first I want to talk about the derivative of that broken process.

In my office, we have a debt clock. A few weeks ago, that debt clock passed a milestone: \$21 trillion. If that weren't bad enough, the commitments of this Federal Government over the last 50 years—actually, indeed, over the last 100 years—the commitments that have been made in the structural programs of this big government bureaucracy have committed us to some \$130 trillion over just the next 30 years.

That means that every household in America owes the equivalent of \$1 million per household. These are not theoretic numbers. These are mathematical realities derived from commitments made by a lot of our programs that we have passed over the last 100 years in this country.

In my opinion, we are well past the tipping point with this debt. Last week, the CBO came out with their new forecast for fiscal year 2018 and beyond. I want to talk about that today because there are some dramatic revelations in there. At \$21 trillion, we are already well past the tipping point of this crisis.

In my opinion, the CBO forecasts don't do a very good job of forecasting revenue. For example, they take very little account of foreign direct investment. They underestimate the impact of the change to the repatriation tax law we just made. I believe the revenue forecast is out of line, but I do agree with their forecast of expenses, and I

think therein lies a great learning, if we will pay attention to it.

In their forecast, on top of the \$21 trillion we just crossed over, their projection is that we will add another \$10 trillion or more to this debt. Whether I might quibble with that a little bit or not, it is directionally correct. Because of that, I am on the floor of the Senate tonight talking about the crisis and the tipping point we are well past, because we are out of time to deal with this.

In just the next 5 years, the interest on this debt alone, in the year 2023, will be greater than the amount of money we spend on the defense of this country, and that assumes a very low forecast for interest rates. One of the reasons for that is that the last administration, instead of buying bonds or putting out bonds that were longer in duration, put out bonds that were shorter in duration because they had a little lower interest rate—interest rates were fundamentally zero—and the rest of the world put out longer duration bonds. So what happens is that these shorter duration bonds are maturing, and when they mature they have to go out at more and more expensive rates.

In just the last 18 months, the Fed fund rate has been increased six times, one-quarter point each. That 150 basis points on our size debt is more than \$300 billion a year. As a matter of fact—and this is not a forecast—this year, the interest on our debt, the interest that we pay, is \$50 billion more than just last year—\$50 billion more than we spent last year. Fifty billion dollars—this is a train wreck coming at us, and Congress has been reluctant to deal with it straight-up.

Every year, we go through a budget process. I have been in the budget process now for 3 years, since I got here. The first year we did a budget, it took \$7.5 trillion out of the expense plan for the next 10 years—but it lasted 4 months. It was waived by this body in order to get to a grand bargain so the other side would vote for funding the government by the end of that fiscal year and so we wouldn't have a shutdown.

Last year, there was no budget done. It was basically deemed so Republicans could do reconciliation. Then, again, the budget for this year was not done. It was deemed so Republicans could again get to reconciliation. I believe reconciliation is being used improperly. We used reconciliation to try to fix healthcare and try to fix the Tax Code.

Our country is at a point where this debt now has to be our No. 1 priority. We have two crises in our country today. One is this debt crisis. The other, I would argue, is the global security crisis. The world hasn't been more dangerous than this in my lifetime, and I believe the two are interrelated.

The last Congress allowed the last administration to disinvest in the military to a point where we are now in jeopardy of being able to defend our country. It is time for action.

In business, if you get into a crisis like this, it is all hands on deck because it is about survival. I would argue that it is about that time here. The problem is that we really haven't talked about the problem in its entirety and what we can still do about it. I want to talk tonight about what is driving this.

When we look at the numbers, it is very clear. We raise about \$2.2 trillion in taxes. That is income taxes on individuals, income taxes on corporations, and other sources of revenue—about \$2.2 trillion. We use the first dollars to pay for mandatory expenses.

We have two types of expenses: mandatory and discretionary. Mandatory expenses are those like your home mortgage, your car payment, your insurance payment, things that get deducted automatically out of your paycheck. We have that. It is called mandatory expenses.

What is mandatory expenses? Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, pension benefits for Federal employees, Federal retirement, veterans' benefits, and so forth. Those are mandatory expenses, and we subsidize those today. Even though there are trust funds, the Social Security and Medicare trust funds are not able to meet the needs of the citizens who are drawing benefits today. We are subsidizing out of that general account almost half a trillion dollars a year. If you include Medicaid and ObamaCare, the healthcare costs, it is almost \$1 trillion, today. Out of the \$2 trillion that we collect in taxes, about 25 percent of it automatically goes to those three line items. Then, about another \$1.7 trillion are then taken out. Debt service is \$316 billion—almost half of what we spend on our military today.

After you take all of that out, there is only about a half trillion dollars left. Yet we still have all of the other discretionary expenses that we fuss about when we do the budget. The budget only deals with discretionary spending. I believe that is one of our problems. What is in discretionary spending? Defense, veterans, and all other domestic discretionary spending.

So it is \$1.2 trillion. Ten years ago, it was \$1.5 trillion. Because of the Budget Control Act and because of sequestration, discretionary expenses have declined in America over the last decade, partly because of the good work of our appropriators and because of the laws that were put in place.

Fundamentally, about half of what we spend this year on discretionary spending, which includes the military, VA, and all the other domestic discretionary spending—that is the State Department, foreign aid, education, health, welfare, the whole bit—comes out of that. Half of it is borrowed money. Over the last decade, 100 percent of what we spent in our discretionary expenses was borrowed money.

When we allocated money in this body for hurricane victims—and we all know we want to do that—every dollar we al-

located was borrowed money. We had to go to China or to some other country and hope they are going to buy another issue of our government bonds in order for us to then subsidize our standard of living.

I have been arguing for 5 years that our standard of living is somewhat artificial because of the amount of Federal debt and the amount of household debt in America today.

The other thing I am so distraught about is that this would be fine if it were just this year. But we have a system where we have commitments over the next 30 years that are out of control.

This chart shows discretionary spending historically over the last 18 years, back to 2000. The red line is discretionary spending. The blue line in the last 18 years is mandatory spending. They both went up about the same—mandatory spending, a little more.

But look at what happens from here forward. This is not my number. This is CBO's number. This is CBO on expenses behind mandatory expenses. Again, that is Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, pension and benefits for Federal employees, and healthcare expense obligations of the Federal Government. This is a 20-year schedule. Again, the blue line is mandatory expenses and the red line is discretionary expenses. It goes from about \$2.5 trillion this year on mandatory expenses, and in the 10-year period it goes to over \$8 trillion.

That is in line with what happened just in the last 16 years. In 2000, the size of our government was \$2.4 trillion. The size of our government in 2016, the last year of President Obama, was \$4.2 trillion. So we went from \$2.4 trillion to \$4.2 trillion in that 16-year period of time, one Republican President, one Democratic President.

But this is what we face. You can't tax enough, you can't grow enough, and you can't cut enough. There is no way we can deal with this without failing to meet the obligations that this country has made to its senior citizens and to its people in need for the last 50 years.

What are you going to tell people when you have to tell them that the Social Security trust fund went to zero this year? The Medicare and Social Security trust funds go to zero in 14 years, and there is no answer for that. Today, we subsidize over a half trillion dollars into just Social Security and Medicare out of the taxes we raise. We never intended to do that. It was never supposed to happen. But past generations liberalized those programs to such a degree that the income coming in doesn't cover the outgo of those programs.

My mother is a great example. She lived until she was 93. She passed away last year. She worked for 30 years; she was retired for 30 years. There is no way the math works when that happens.

In the 1930s, when they put Social Security in, it was intended to be a last-resort insurance supplement, not a primary go-to retirement plan. The life expectancy at that time was about 59; this program started at 62. So the math was on their side. Today, life expectancy is in the 80s, and we have a retirement age of 67. So we know the math doesn't work. This cannot happen.

But the good news is there are five areas of work I believe that Congress and the administration need to begin to focus on—and now.

First, I believe our budget process is broken. I have been on the Budget Committee now for 3 years, and I know it doesn't work. It hasn't worked but four times in 44 years to fund the Federal Government. We are supposed to appropriate 12 bills a year; we have averaged 2.5 over the last 44 years.

Let me say that again. In any business, in any enterprise—a medical office, or it doesn't matter—if you were charged to do 12 items and you did 2.5, you would fix something. You would have to fix it, or you would be out of business.

We have used continuing resolutions over 180 times. Actually, Congress has shut the Federal Government down, has not funded the government, 20 times in that 44-year history—20 times. I had no idea that was the case, and I bet most Americans don't either. That is unconscionable.

We don't even deal with every dollar we spend in the budget. We deal only with 25 percent of what we spend. That is the discretionary. That is what we did on the budget here. This is never covered in the budget by law. We don't talk about it. We can no longer do this.

The first thing you have to do is fix the budget process. Second of all, I believe you have to get after redundant agencies and extraneous expenses of the Federal Government. The GAO, the General Accountability Office, thinks we have somewhere around \$700 billion or \$800 billion of wasted spending every year in a \$4 trillion budget. That is about 20 percent, I believe that.

The third thing you have to do is grow the economy. Last year, President Trump said job one is growing the economy. We focused on regulations, energy, and taxes. The economy started growing. In the last 12 months, we have had 3 percent GDP growth. That is 120 basis points above the 1.8 percent we enjoyed for 8 years—the lowest economic performance in our U.S. history.

We believe, with future work on these things, that the economy will continue to grow. We need to work on immigration, trade, and infrastructure to continue this work.

The good news is that the biggest item—the fourth item we need to work on is that we can solve these items; that is, we have to save Social Security and Medicare. When I say “save,” I mean we have to plan for the time and fix it now before the trust fund goes to zero. When the trust fund goes to zero, there is no way benefits can be paid in

full. If we don't do that today, there will be a crisis of a magnitude that I don't want to even imagine if we let this get to that point. That is the fourth one.

The fifth area of work is, we have to get at the spiraling driver of our healthcare costs, not the insurance that we have been fussing about for the last 8 years. We now really need to make a serious, concerted attempt in America to get after the drivers of healthcare costs.

Those are the five areas. I am convinced that when faced with a crisis, Americans are always the best in history at dealing with a crisis. We are not always the first to recognize we are in one.

My role tonight, as it has been for the last 3 years, is to call this crisis out. The CBO has all the numbers. Whether you believe them or not, they are correct. I would argue with their revenue numbers a little bit. Some might argue with their expense numbers. Bottom line, no matter what, you know that with a \$21 trillion debt, the interest expense is going to grow to almost \$1 trillion over the next 10 years.

If we don't do something within this planning period of 10 years, the CBO says that our interest expense alone will go to \$1 trillion. There is no way this can happen.

We have to change the broken system. I think there has been no other time—I think the realization is getting there. The CBO has given us the numbers. The GAO has given us the opportunities and measured some of those opportunities.

I think the political will in this country is now such that they realize we have a debt crisis, and they have more courage, I think, to face it than elected officials do. What drives this town is the next cycle. In the House, it is 2 years; in the Senate, it is 6 years: Oh, my goodness, we can't do anything to hurt that next cycle. We have to have more on our side than they have on their side.

It is time to put that behind us. This cannot be solved with a partisan solution. My good friend from Rhode Island, Senator WHITEHOUSE, and I have cosponsored a bill that goes after and deals with parts of the solution for the budget problem. There is a select committee right now that was formed by the leadership—Democratic and Republican, House and Senate. There are 16 members. I am privileged to be on it. I believe there are things we can do in that select committee to fix our budget process that would help us deal with the additional things we are adding to this debt crisis.

Make no mistake, that will not solve this debt crisis. You will not solve the debt crisis by fixing the budget process alone, but you will not solve the debt crisis unless and until you do fix the budget process. The same thing applies to growing the economy. The same thing is involved with the other items we can look at in terms of redundant

agencies and the healthcare costs in this country.

America has come too far to fail now. We owe it to our kids, our grandkids, and the kids and grandkids of our kids and grandkids to deal with this right now.

I met with Chairman Greenspan last year. I had the privilege to sit with him and talk about this very issue. He reminded me that in 1983, they had a solution. If we had done it in 1983, it wouldn't have been nearly as onerous as it is going to be when we try to fix this.

Again, in the late nineties, Newt Gingrich and Bill Clinton together—two different parties—had an agreement. They got very close to signing it, but then it fell apart because of the political nonsense in this town.

I believe the time has come right now for both sides to put our differences aside, live with an 80-percent solution and deal with this problem right now. If we don't, we will not be able to hand this to our kids. That is the last thing I want to close with. People say: Well, we are leaving our kids and grandkids a problem.

Yes, we are. Look, in this planning period, the next 10 years, when interest rates are higher than what we are spending on national defense, that crisis is right here. It is now. We are going to see it in the next decade, in my opinion. It will make 2008 and 2009 pale in comparison.

I have never seen a time when a crisis would pull us together any more ardently than this one would be right now. The question is, will we recognize that we are in a moment of crisis?

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

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

SYRIA

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the magnitude of atrocities and devastation in Syria caused by ISIS and the Assad regime, with support from Russia and Iran, is appalling. When this calamity began in 2011, I doubt anyone predicted it would come to this: hundreds of