

When I became chief of staff to Gov. Mark Dayton in 2010, Dave quickly called me up to offer his advice and support, with his characteristic understatement and dry sense of humor.

In Minnesota, Senator Durenberger was respected as a volunteer, a thinker, a doer. He was always ready to pitch in and help with a wide array of organizations that he saw were doing good work, from those dedicated to environmental protection to conservation, to children's health.

In the Senate, Dave built a reputation as a powerful advocate and expert on healthcare reform. He was instrumental in passing the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act, which recognized the civil rights of people living with disabilities, and he was an effective leader on legislation to protect our air and water, to clean up Superfund sites, and to protect public lands so that all of our children and grandchildren could enjoy them forever.

After he left the Senate, he continued to advocate for the things that he cared about, from improving healthcare to protecting the environment. He became one of the Nation's leading health policy experts at the University of St. Thomas and helped to mentor the next generation of health policy leaders.

When I came to the Senate and won a seat on the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, a committee that Dave also served on, he immediately reached out to me to offer support and ideas. Every year, he organized a group of young healthcare leaders, through the Health Policy Center at St. Thomas, to come to Washington, and I always made time to sit down and talk with them. It was so great to see how Senator Durenberger continued to instill in these policy fellows the mission of diving in beneath the headlines to figure out exactly what would help to make healthcare more accessible and affordable for everyone.

When Dave was elected to the Senate, he was an Independent Republican, as the Minnesota State party was then called. He later dropped the Republican part and was a proud Independent—always willing to work with both Democrats and Republicans to solve problems. He was an outspoken critic of President Trump, and he lamented the extremism in the Republican Party today. Dave always stood for bipartisanship, pragmatism, and politics that was about improving people's lives. He proudly called himself a progressive Republican. I love that.

If I had to name one thing that characterized Senator Dave Durenberger, it would be his determination to find solutions to the problems that hold people back in their lives, especially problems with healthcare. He didn't care whether an idea came from Republicans or Democrats. He just cared about what was going to make a difference.

As I reflect on his life and his time in the Senate, I am reminded that his

Midwestern brand of bipartisan, commonsense, pragmatic politics still lives on in the Senate today. Beneath the headlines and the division and extremism, many of us on both sides of the aisle still carry on his legacy by working together to try to find common ground and solve problems.

Today, as we mourn the loss of Senator Durenberger, let us take inspiration from his example of thoughtful, pragmatic, and results-oriented politics. May his memory be a blessing.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Texas.

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, it was a busy weekend for the U.S. military, which has now shot down three unidentified objects over North American airspace in as many days.

On Friday, an F-22 took down an object hovering over Alaska, which officials described as being about the size of a small car. On Saturday, an F-22 brought down an object over Canada that was described only as cylindrical. On Sunday, an F-16 shot down another unidentified object over Lake Huron, which was traveling at about 20,000 feet—low enough to interfere with commercial air traffic.

Given the high profile of the Chinese spy balloon, this is, obviously, of great interest to the American people.

Over the last several days, starting in late February, the American people watched as China's surveillance balloon traveled across the country before President Biden finally instructed the military to shoot it down off the coast of South Carolina. That was just 9 days ago. The military is still recovering pieces of that balloon from the bottom of the Atlantic in an effort to gain some answers, but given everything that has happened in the interim, the swirl of questions has only grown.

The United States has shot down four objects flying over our country since February 4, and they have identified one of those four objects. Based on what we know now or perhaps what we don't know now, we know the government has shot down three objects of unknown provenance. Since they don't know what they are, presumably, they don't know where they came from; yet the President ordered them shot down. We have not been told whether they were emitting any sort of signature, like heat, which might be picked up by an infrared sensor, or some other signal, with data either coming from or going to that object. So you can imagine that the American people have a lot of questions about these unidentified objects as well as the broader threat to our national interest.

They are looking to the administration for answers, and the only path forward is full and complete transparency. President Biden needs to explain what happened and just how concerned the

American people should be, and he needs to consult with Congress and share the information he has with us. Until that happens, speculation will only intensify. If you don't know what the cause of a particular concern is or an anxiety or maybe even a threat, it is only human nature to speculate and imagine the very worst. So the last several days have prompted a lot of questions, and I hope the administration will provide some necessary answers soon.

I expect the Chinese spy balloon and these unidentified objects will be the topics of discussion in the Senate this week. I know all of our colleagues, Republican and Democrat alike, are eager to learn more, and I hope the administration will be what it has not yet been, and that is forthright and transparent.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Madam President, on another matter, this last week, President Biden spoke at his State of the Union Address about the looming debt crisis, but instead of a plea for unity and bipartisanship and working together, he turned it into political fearmongering and finger-pointing. He even suggested that Republicans wanted to cut funding for Social Security and Medicare, on which millions upon millions of seniors depend—something that could not be further from the truth. You might call it the Big Lie.

Speaker MCCARTHY is leading debt ceiling discussions for Republicans, and he has been absolutely clear that these programs are not on the chopping block. As the American people witnessed last Tuesday evening, Republicans all agree on this point. Social Security and Medicare are a lifeline for seniors and some of the most vulnerable people in our country, and these programs are not going anywhere, period.

But what the President and our Democratic colleagues have failed to acknowledge is that the status quo is not sustainable, particularly when it comes to Social Security. We are told by the actuaries that unless Congress does something, Social Security and Medicare will become insolvent and incapable of paying the benefits upon which millions of seniors depend.

I have to ask whether the President, by this fearmongering, made it easier or harder for us to work together to meet our responsibilities and to eliminate the threat of insolvency, which we are on a path to if Congress does nothing. Did the President make it more likely that Republicans and Democrats would work together to provide for the solvency and survival of Social Security or Medicare by fearmongering and finger-pointing? I think we all know he did not.

Projections show that Social Security recipients will see a reduction of almost 25 percent in their benefits if nothing changes. So we know we have to do something. Texans who live on a fixed income cannot handle a 25-percent cut. They are already struggling

to keep up with inflation as things are, which is now about 6½ percent. That is essentially a pay cut for the American people, thanks to the spending of our Democratic colleagues and this administration. But a 25-percent reduction is absolutely unfathomable. Given the strong bipartisan support for Social Security that we saw last week, I hope we will all agree that we can't allow these programs to run out of money.

There is a clear bipartisan desire to save Social Security. Last Congress, Senator ROMNEY of Utah and Senator MANCHIN of West Virginia introduced the TRUST Act to rescue Social Security. I was proud to cosponsor that legislation, and I hope it will gain some momentum this year.

Unfortunately, the White House has already slammed the door on that possibility once again. We see a trend here, where instead of engaging in a bipartisan manner with Members of Congress to try to solve problems, the President just makes things harder and less likely for that consultation and that cooperation to occur.

The White House spokesman even described commissions like the one the bill would create as “a death panel for Social Security and Medicare.” Yet four decades ago, then-Senator Biden voted for Social Security reforms proposed by what he now refers to as a “death panel,” and those reforms extended the program for another 50 years.

Two years ago, the Senate voted on Senator ROMNEY's TRUST Act as an amendment to the Democrats' reckless budget, and it actually passed by a vote of 71 to 29. That is more than 20 of our Democratic colleagues who voted for it—a strong bipartisan vote, 71 to 29.

It is completely irresponsible for the President to claim that Republicans want to cut Social Security and Medicare and then demagogue the very bipartisan efforts to protect the longevity of these programs. How shameful and irresponsible is that?

Whether or not the President will admit it, he knows that Social Security is operating on borrowed time. We need to ensure its long-term success, and the TRUST Act is a great starting point for conversations to do just that.

Of course, this is just one small part of the major changes we need to see to get our fiscal house in order. The national debt is now \$31.5 trillion. Congress can't raise the debt limit and continue to borrow and spend like there is no tomorrow. Interest on that \$31 trillion debt approaches \$1 trillion a year. That means more and more of the discretionary spending that we need in order to defend our country or to support other priorities goes up in smoke because we have to pay interest on that \$31.5 trillion in borrowed money.

Yes, we do need to avoid a debt crisis, and no one in Congress wants us to default on our debts, but we also need to enact broader reforms to change the trajectory of this out-of-control spending.

Last week, I was proud to join with Senator HYDE-SMITH of Mississippi in introducing an amendment to the Constitution that would require a balanced budget. I have authored and voted for similar legislation in the past, and I believe that this is a critical component to smart spending reforms.

Families, businesses, and State and local governments all have no choice but to balance their budgets. If there is not money coming in the front door, they can't spend it out the back door—unless, of course, you are the Federal Government and you print money. The Federal Government is the only glaring exception to this commonsense financial practice, and we are seeing the consequences.

The national debt has skyrocketed from \$3.2 trillion in 1980 to \$9.7 trillion in 2000 and then to \$31.5 trillion today. It has more than tripled since 2000. It is past time to take action to address this growing debt crisis, and there is real-world evidence that balanced budgets work.

Every State in the Nation, including Texas, has one, and we are far from operating in the red like the Federal Government. In fact, Texas has gone into the current legislative session with a \$33 billion surplus. You don't do that by borrowing money and forcing your children and grandchildren to pay the bills. You do it by responsible budgeting. I have always been a proponent of taking the Texas model nationwide, and this is an example of my State's smart fiscal policies in action that the Federal Government needs to emulate.

One of the earliest lessons we teach our children is about only spending the money that you have and not spending money you don't have. It is time to apply that same commonsense logic to the Federal Government.

I appreciate Senator HYDE-SMITH's leadership on this bill, and I am proud to be one of the 23 cosponsors and would invite all of our colleagues to consider joining us in cosponsoring this legislation.

You might wonder: Is this some Republican trick or not?

Well, it is interesting to note that the current occupant of the White House, President Biden, voted for a balanced budget amendment when he was a Member of the U.S. Senate, and he didn't just do it once. He didn't just do it twice. He did it three times.

Then-Senator Biden voted for a balanced budget amendment in March of 1995, when the debt was \$4.9 trillion. In June of 1996, he voted for a balanced budget amendment when the debt was \$5.1 trillion. And in March of 1997, when the debt stood at \$5.4 trillion, Joe Biden—then-Senator Biden—voted for a balanced amendment to the Constitution.

My Republican colleagues have offered a range of proposals to rein in the national debt and to get America's spending habits in check, and all of these ideas should be part of a serious discussion to address this crisis.

If you strip away the agreements about how we got here and the best path forward, there is one unavoidable truth: When it comes to finances, the United States is on an unsustainable course. The national debt will haunt every generation until leaders show enough courage to make tough choices and fix this mess, and I can't think of any better time than now.

I hope President Biden will stop the fearmongering and stop the demagoguing and take this crisis seriously. Republicans and Democrats alike want to avoid a debt crisis, but so far we haven't taken the necessary steps to rein in the irresponsible spending and to support, sustain, and save important programs like Social Security and Medicare for future generations.

These are popular, commonsense goals, and I hope that our Democratic colleagues will stop playing politics and start talking about the solutions.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). The Senator from Louisiana.

NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM RISK RATING 2.0

Mr. CASSIDY. Madam President, the National Flood Insurance Program Risk Rating 2.0 has officially been in effect for almost a year, and families in Louisiana are feeling the unfolding disaster.

We are not talking about a storm or a flood, which the National Flood Insurance Program is supposed to protect against. We are talking about the financial crisis unfolding at kitchen tables. Families cannot afford the premium hikes that the NFIP is planning with Risk Rating 2.0. For some, the premiums have become unaffordable and threaten the collapse of the value of their home.

For now, rate hikes are capped at 18 percent per year, but these compound year after year. So for the couple who has lived in their house for decades, they are not thinking, OK, it is only 18 percent. No, they are thinking it is 18 percent compounded upon 18 percent. And they don't have a plan to move: Oh, let's escape from it. This is where they have been for decades. Eighteen percent compounds and adds up very quickly.

This is not fiction. These are real stories that I hear from folks in Louisiana—great Americans, great Louisianians who love our country—and they are wondering what in the heck is going on.

An example is the Bourgeois family, an elderly couple in Raceland. They both turned 83 last year. They have owned their home for 56 years. It has never been in a flood zone, and it has never flooded. Before Risk Rating 2.0, they paid \$500 a year in flood insurance premiums. After Risk Rating 2.0, they are scheduled to pay, when fully in effect, \$500 per month—from \$500 a year to \$500 per month.