

KING, said the pledge no longer applied because, “the world has changed. And the economic situation is different.”

These were just two interviews with George Stephanopoulos. But sometimes progress on the Sunday news shows can foreshadow progress in the negotiating room. In fact, these comments by Senators CHAMBLISS, GRAHAM, and Congressman KING appear to have started a trend.

Yesterday, Senator CORKER echoed their sentiments. He released his own fiscal plan, which contains \$1 trillion in new revenues. Asked whether his inclusion of revenues puts him at cross purposes with Grover Norquist, Senator CORKER said:

I'm not obligated on the pledge. The only thing I'm honoring is the oath I take when I serve, when I'm sworn in this January.

Senator MURKOWSKI said similar things yesterday. Even Senator SESSIONS showed hints of compromise when he said, about the pledge:

We've got to deal with the crisis we face. We've got to deal with the political reality of the President's victory.

And then this morning, the vaunted Wall Street Journal editorial page even seemed to distance itself from Mr. Norquist. Of the need to compromise with President Obama, the Journal counseled:

This is where Mr. Norquist can give some ground. If taxes are going up anyway because the Bush rates expire, and Republicans can stop them from going up as much as they otherwise would, then pledge-takers deserve some credit for that.

We disagree with the forms of revenues that most of these Republicans have in mind. Many of the Republicans expressing openness to revenues want to pursue them only through tax reform next year. And even then, they are only willing to consider limits of deductions as opposed to rate increases on the very wealthy.

Democrats, on the other hand, believe that even if Republicans want to kick tax reform into 2013, a significant downpayment on revenues must be enacted before January 1. And we further believe that the fairest, most straightforward way to make that downpayment on revenues is by decoupling the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy. Limiting deductions is a necessary revenue-raising component of a grand bargain, but it does not and cannot replace the need for restoring the Clinton-era rates for the top two tax brackets. Republicans are not quite there yet in terms of acknowledging this, but they are moving slowly in the right direction.

As the Washington Post reported this weekend, for the first time in decades there is a bipartisan consensus in favor of asking the wealthy to pay a little more to reduce the deficit. The question is how to do it. This is an encouraging development. It suggests that Republicans are slowly absorbing one of the lessons of the 2012 election which is that elections continue to be won in the middle, and victories will remain

elusive for any party that caters to special-interest groups that occupy either the far left or the far right.

Over the years the Democratic Party has wrestled with the same issues Republicans are facing. When I was elected to Congress in 1981, crime was ripping apart my district. I came to Washington with the goal of working to pass new laws to crack down on crime. Lo and behold, I found that the Democratic Congress at the time was literally outsourcing the drafting of crime legislation to the ACLU. I have great respect for the views of civil libertarians. But at that time, the activists' motto was, Let 100 guilty people go free lest you convict 1 innocent person. That view was far outside the mainstream, but it dominated our party's thinking on crime for better than a decade. Our party suffered for it. We didn't snap out of it until President Clinton passed the crime bill in the 1990s. After that, we won back the trust of moderate, middle-class voters.

I know the echo chambers some of our Republican colleagues are in and I know how difficult it is. But if history shows anything, after suffering some bad losses at the polls earlier this month many Republicans are now realizing the need to snap out of it on taxes.

Grover Norquist has had a good run. It has lasted far longer than 15 minutes. But his stringent views make him an outlier now. It is not unlike what happened to his longtime friend Ralph Reed, who steered the Republican Party too far right on social issues in the 1990s and is hardly heard from anymore.

Mr. Norquist will likely not be departing the scene anytime soon, but perhaps he could switch his focus to immigration. He makes a lot of sense on the need for a comprehensive immigration reform bill, and I would be first to work with him on that. But as the events of the last weeks show, on taxes, Grover Norquist is out on an island.

In conclusion, I salute my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who have disavowed his group's pledge. I will encourage others to do the same. The more who do, the closer we will come to a bipartisan agreement on our fiscal problems.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

EXECUTIVE SESSION—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. I move to proceed to executive session for the purpose of the consideration of treaty document 112-7, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

I ask unanimous consent that prior to the clerk reporting the motion, Senator MCCAIN be recognized, and when he finishes that I be recognized.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I think my colleagues and I who have been

here for a while remember one of the more moving moments that we experienced in our service here, and that was the signing of the disabilities law on the White House lawn. Bipartisan members of the disabled community were there. The President of the United States, George Herbert Walker Bush, and so many others were there. One of the prime individuals who was largely responsible was our beloved leader at that time, Bob Dole, a man who epitomized, in my view, how a disability can be overcome to go to the highest levels of American Government.

I freely admit that I love Bob Dole. I listen to him. I appreciate his leadership. I think the majority leader would agree that we appreciated his bipartisanship during a great deal of his time.

I hope my colleagues will, before deciding to vote, at least listen to the letter that was addressed to all of us by Senator Bob Dole which we received yesterday:

As you may know, tomorrow the Senate will vote on the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, CRPD. Unfortunately, I am currently at Walter Reed and so cannot call you personally, but wanted to connect with you via e-mail on this time sensitive matter and ask for your help. I hope you will support this important treaty.

The CRPD is the first international treaty to address disability rights globally. It is an opportunity to advance the great American tradition of supporting the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities on a global basis. Ratification of the CRPD will improve fiscal, technological, and communication access outside the United States, thereby helping to ensure that Americans—particularly many thousands of disabled American veterans—have equal opportunities to live, work, and travel abroad. It will also create a new global market for accessibility goods.

The CRPD is supported by a number of individuals and groups, including 21 veterans groups, 26 faith-based organizations, over 300 disability organizations, and the Chamber of Commerce. Your vote would help to reaffirm the goals of equality, access, and inclusion for Americans with disabilities—both when those affected are in the United States and outside of our country's borders.

I would greatly appreciate your support of the CRPD.

God bless America, Bob Dole.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Senator MCCAIN is absolutely right. Those of us who served with Bob Dole revere Bob Dole. He is such a stalwart figure in the history of America. He has all the qualities of a leader that I admire and certainly wish I had. He has a great sense of humor. No one who has ever served in the Senate has ever had a better, quicker sense of humor than Bob Dole, and he used it to perfection.

He called me a few days ago. He is at Walter Reed not for a checkup; he is there because he is infirm. He is sick. We should do this for many reasons, not the least of which is to recognize what a great leader Bob Dole is and has been for our country.

I ask the clerk to report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] moves to proceed to executive session to consider treaty document No. 1127.

Mr. REID. I ask for the yeas and nays on my motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? There appears to be a sufficient second. There is a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the motion. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) is necessarily absent.

Mr. KYL. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FRANKEN). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 61, nays 36, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 205 Leg.]

YEAS—61

Akaka	Hagan	Murray
Ayotte	Harkin	Nelson (NE)
Barrasso	Hatch	Nelson (FL)
Baucus	Inouye	Pryor
Begich	Johnson (SD)	Reed
Bennet	Kerry	Reid
Bingaman	Klobuchar	Rockefeller
Boxer	Kohl	Sanders
Brown (MA)	Landrieu	Schumer
Brown (OH)	Lautenberg	Shaheen
Cantwell	Leahy	Snowe
Cardin	Levin	Stabenow
Carper	Lieberman	Tester
Casey	Lugar	Udall (CO)
Collins	Manchin	Udall (NM)
Conrad	McCain	Warner
Coons	McCaskill	Webb
Durbin	Menendez	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Merkley	Wyden
Franken	Mikulski	
Gillibrand	Murkowski	

NAYS—36

Alexander	Enzi	McConnell
Blunt	Graham	Moran
Boozman	Grassley	Paul
Burr	Heller	Portman
Chambliss	Hoeben	Risch
Coats	Hutchison	Rubio
Coburn	Inhofe	Sessions
Cochran	Isakson	Shelby
Corker	Johanns	Thune
Cornyn	Johnson (WI)	Toomey
Crapo	Kyl	Vitter
DeMint	Lee	Wicker

NOT VOTING—3

Blumenthal	Kirk	Roberts
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The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the treaty.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Treaty Document No. 112-7, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Senators KERRY and LUGAR are managing this most important treaty. We are now in executive session. We are going to take a couple of hours to see who wants to offer amendments. Senator LUGAR, Senator KERRY or their staffs should be contacted to indicate what, if any, amendments they wish to offer. So

that being the case, we hope that by, let's say 5 o'clock, we will have an idea what the universe of amendments, if any, would be.

I ask unanimous consent that there be a period of debate only on the treaty until 5 p.m. today, with that time equally divided and controlled between the proponents and opponents, and that time actually be controlled by Senators KERRY and LUGAR, and that I be recognized at 5 o'clock.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, let me just reiterate—I think Senator BARRASSO is here and Senator LEE, and others; Senator KYL is also here—we look forward to working over the course of the next few hours with our colleagues to try to come to some understanding of the amendments here.

One of the things that we promised—and Senator REID has altered his approach to this in order to try to accommodate our colleagues—is to make certain we are not closing people out and there is no effort to try to limit the debate.

I do think, by virtue of the work done in committee and otherwise, there is a limit to where we need to go in terms of amendments. So I am perfectly happy—together with Senator LUGAR—to work with our colleagues with respect to a reservation or an understanding or a declaration that they believe needs to be tweaked. We will see what we can do with respect to the number of amendments we want to bring.

Let me just say to my colleagues that this treaty should not be controversial. Senator Robert Dole, President George H.W. Bush, former Republican Attorney General Richard Thornburg, and current colleagues Senator BARRASSO, Senator MORAN, and others have all supported and believe we ought to move forward with this treaty in a bipartisan manner.

I would say to my colleagues that in the wake of the election, this is the first legislative effort we are making on the floor of the Senate. It would be my hope that we could reflect that we heard the American people, who asked us to do their business and to not fall into the pattern of partisan divide, of gridlock that has so characterized the Senate over the course of the last few years. This is our opportunity to prove that the exceptionalism we are all proud to talk about with respect to our country is defined by our doing exceptional work.

This is an opportunity to do that. We have an opportunity to rise with common purpose and make a difference, not just here in the United States, frankly, but most predominately make a difference in the rest of the world as to how people with disabilities are treated. I believe the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an opportunity for us to embrace the

truth in legislating and to separate ourselves from ideological and/or partisan efforts to distort that truth or to prevent, actually, an alternative reality, which is what happens in some cases.

Our colleagues, I am told, want to approach this in good faith. We welcome that. We look forward to sitting down with them, working through what amendments we think we should vote on, and perhaps we can even work together to tweak one of the understandings or declarations in an appropriate way. We would like to make progress. I believe we can get this done. It will be a good moment for the Senate when we do.

I know we have not always agreed on all the issues and certainly not even with respect to this treaty. What I ask of my colleagues is this: Those who oppose this or who are inclined to oppose it, I would say step back and take a look at this treaty and measure the report language, the report the committee put out, and measure the transmittal letter of the President of the United States and the Secretary of State, and what they have said to the Senate is really at stake in this treaty.

I ask my colleagues before they come to the floor to carefully check the factual foundation of this treaty because we have continually heard some outside groups characterizing it in ways that simply do not meet the facts, that do not withstand scrutiny when measured against the law of the United States or international law or the law of the States. This treaty does not require any change whatsoever to American law. None. Zero. There is no impact on American law. There is no ability in this treaty for anybody to gain some new right here in the United States. No individual, American or foreign, gains any access to the courts in an effort to litigate some component of this treaty because the treaty specifically denies people any access to the courts. It is what is called—it is not self-executing. As a consequence of not being self-executing, it gives no right to any litigation.

So the obvious question from somebody might be, well, why do we want to do it then? What is the benefit to us? The benefit is very significant in terms of our diplomacy, in terms of the rights of Americans when they travel abroad, Americans with disabilities.

Now, our bottom line—I think our shared bottom line—Senator LUGAR, Senator MCCAIN, Senator BARRASSO, Senator MORAN, and others who support this treaty believe this will extend the protections to millions of disabled Americans when they leave our shores.

I thank Majority Leader REID for being willing to bring this treaty to the floor at this moment in time when there is obviously a lot on Senators' minds, a lot of business before the Senate. But I believe this treaty will be deemed to have the requisite votes ultimately to show that this is, in fact, in the best interests of our country.