

is a tax. Let's call it what it is. It is going to impose an incredible cost on our economy, not to be borne by corporate America; it will be passed on to the American consumers. If the MIT study that was done a year ago is right, there will be \$3,128 per household in this country to comply with the additional costs that will be imposed as a result of this new cap-and-trade proposal included in the President's budget.

It assumes some \$600 billion for health care reform. We have not seen specifics and details about that, but we are concerned as well about the direction in which that may be headed. There are lots of reasons to be opposed to this budget. There are lots of things we could and should be doing to get this economy growing again, but clearly, raising taxes, spending more money here in Washington, DC, borrowing more from our children and grandchildren is not the way to go about this.

I wish I could say I was presenting the worst-case scenario. The numbers we are seeing here are probably optimistic. I think the President's economic assumptions with respect to inflation, unemployment, GDP growth, and all those sorts of things are overly optimistic. I think they have dramatically understated, as I said, the cost of the cap-and-trade proposal. They have understated savings that will be achieved by reductions in our military spending as a result of drawdowns in Iraq. I don't think that is going to be nearly what they assume it is going to be. I think the actual deficits and debt that are going to come as a result of this budget proposal that the President is putting in front of us is going to be way beyond anything we are even contemplating now.

I have to say, what we are contemplating now is way beyond anything we have seen throughout our Nation's history. It is not fair to future generations for us to be saddling them with this enormous amount of debt. As I have pointed out before on the floor, we have had a tradition in this country of one generation sacrificing for another; one generation going without things so that future generations can have a better life. We have turned that ethic completely on its head with this budget by the amount of borrowing and spending that we are doing and in the amount of taxing. We are taking from future generations and asking them to sacrifice so we can have a better life today because we have not been willing or able to live within our means.

It is high time that Congress started taking the steps necessary to get this budget under control, to not buy into the spending spree. Since we have been here—and it has been a little over 50 days in this new Congress and the new administration—the level of spending is now at \$1.2 trillion—\$24 billion a day or \$1 billion an hour that we have spent already—and that is before we even get to this fiscal year 2010 budget, which

includes historic levels of spending, historic levels of taxation, the largest tax increase in American history, and historic levels of borrowing that asks future generations to make sacrifices which are not fair to ask of them.

It is our responsibility to live within our means. We can do that. We can put policies in place that will be additive in terms of creating jobs and growing our economy and making our country stronger. Going down this path is not going to do that. I hope as we debate this in the next couple of weeks that it will become clear to the American people who is standing up for the American taxpayer and what the costs are—the actual costs—that we are asking not only them to bear but asking their children and grandchildren to bear.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of Colorado). Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

ST. PATRICK'S DAY 2009

Mr. DURBIN. Well, Mr. President, it is St. Patrick's Day, and you might notice a lot of green ties on the floor of the Senate. I notice the Presiding Officer has a nice one on.

I wish to just say for a moment how proud I am to have a grandmother, who passed away, named Mary Margaret Gaul, who was always proud of her Irish heritage and convinced us as kids that is where God would hang out, that great Republic of Ireland. It meant a lot to us growing up as kids to celebrate St. Patrick's Day with my grandmother and to try to continue that tradition in our own time.

But it goes beyond just family connections. It is almost impossible to overstate the importance of Ireland's contributions to America. From our earliest days as a nation, Ireland and America have been united by unbreakable bonds of friendship, family, and a shared commitment to liberty and freedom.

There is a great quote from George Washington, who once said:

When our friendless standard was first unfurled for resistance, who were the strangers who first mustered around our staff? And when it reeled in the fight, who more bravely sustained it than Erin's generous sons?

In the more than two centuries since then, America has been enriched immeasurably by the contributions of the Irish, and Irish Americans, in every field and every walk of life.

And the contributions go both ways.

It just was not the "sons of Erin" who stood and fought on our side with George Washington in the Revolution, it was a son of America, Brooklyn-born Eamonn deValera, who, in 1921, became the first President of a free Ireland.

And it was another son of Irish America, former Senate majority leader George Mitchell, who helped broker the Good Friday Peace Accord nearly 11 years ago.

That hard-won historic agreement laid out a path to end more than 30 years of sectarian bloodshed in Northern Ireland and create a new province, a new government, and a new dream.

For more than a decade, the Good Friday agreement has inspired people around the world to believe it is possible to resolve old hatreds, it is possible to heal old wounds.

To paraphrase the great Irish poet and Nobel laureate, Seamus Heaney, it is possible—with courage and diplomacy—for cooperation to replace confrontation and hope to triumph over history.

We have been horrified in recent days by the reprehensible murders in Northern Ireland of two unarmed British soldiers and a police constable. The two soldiers were days away from being dispatched to Afghanistan. They were the first British soldiers killed in Northern Ireland since that Good Friday agreement. The police constable's death was the first terrorist killing of a member of Northern Ireland's new, carefully balanced police force. The police force was created a couple years ago, and it is an important symbol of political reconciliation.

Their deaths appear to be the work of isolated extremists who have no place and no support in Northern Ireland today.

If it is possible for any good to come from these despicable acts, it is in the reactions of people in Northern Ireland. In the wake of the killings, we have seen a renewed commitment to peace and reconciliation. Former enemies on both sides of "the Troubles" have condemned the killings and vowed not to retaliate with violence.

Martin McGuinness, Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland's power-sharing Government and leader of Sinn Féin, the political wing of the IRA, called the perpetrators of these killings: "traitors to the island of Ireland."

Leaders of Northern Ireland's two largest loyalist paramilitary groups—the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Defence Association—have also condemned the killings and vowed that they will not return to violence.

Most poignantly, we have seen the commitment to peace in the resolve of thousands of ordinary people in Northern Ireland.

Last Monday, on the morning after the killings of the two British soldiers at a military base, hundreds of people gathered in the nearby town of Antrim for a prayer service at the police cordon where the shootings took place.

The worshipers included members of the local Catholic, Presbyterian, Church of Ireland, and Methodist Churches—all praying together.

A Catholic priest told a reporter his parishioners were determined to show their outrage over the murders, but they wanted to do so collectively with their neighbors from other churches.

The priest told a reporter:

In the past, if something like this happened, people would withdraw into their own [separate] community. This time, everybody was united because it was an attack on everybody—on the peace we all own.

Last Wednesday, thousands more people attended dignified, silent “peace rallies” in Belfast, Derry, and other towns in Northern Ireland. Young and old, men and women, Protestants and Catholics stood shoulder to shoulder in the cold to express their horror at these killings and their resolve to maintain the Good Friday peace.

Signs carried by many of the more than 2,000 people who gathered at Belfast City Hall seemed to express their collective resolve. The signs read simply: “No going back.”

Many of us remember how difficult the Northern Ireland peace negotiations were, how often they seemed on the verge of collapse. But their collective determination, and the wise leadership of George Mitchell, led them to an agreement, led them to use diplomats and politicians but also the faith and courage of ordinary people to bring organizations and institutions that had been at war for decades together in peace.

Last weekend, in Chicago, we had a great St. Patrick’s Day celebration. We dyed the Chicago River green, drank a lot of beer, marched in parades. Everybody wore their green and had a glorious time.

I attended a breakfast honoring a great organization. The Irish American Partnership is working to create a more hopeful future for the children of Ireland—both north and south. They support educational and other efforts to replace old divisions with understanding and cooperation.

On this St. Patrick’s Day, we want the people of Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Great Britain to know America shares their grief and outrage over these killings. We also share their resolve never to go back.

Just as it was in America’s national interest to help broker the Good Friday peace agreement, it is in our interest now to help the people of Northern Ireland reclaim that peace.

Now, before I yield the floor, I cannot let St. Patrick’s Day pass without saying a word about a great man whose family has become synonymous with Irish America, with peace in Northern Ireland, and with so many other noble causes.

Senator TED KENNEDY—KNOWN AS SIR EDWARD by those of us who are honored to call him a colleague—is not here on the Senate floor today. But we see his pride in his Irish heritage in the shamrock sugar cookies and green punch he had delivered to the Democratic cloakroom today, as he has done on every St. Patrick’s Day for decades.

More importantly, we feel TED KENNEDY’s influence in this Senate’s efforts to promote justice and opportunity in our own Nation—to provide more Americans with jobs, health care, and education, so they can make a good life for themselves and their families.

On this St. Patrick’s Day, I know I speak for all my colleagues in the Senate in wishing Senator KENNEDY slainte.

To your health, TED. We look forward to seeing you back soon.

A few months ago, Senator KENNEDY’s wife Vicki, at the Democratic Convention in Denver, handed me this little blue plastic bracelet. It has a word on it they made up for the occasion, so all of us who stand by TED and think of him every day would carry this little reminder with a bracelet that says one word: Tedstrong.

Well, we are strong in our love for this great Senator. He has been strong in his love for this great country. It is a good thing to remember him on one of his happiest days, St. Patrick’s Day.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, before my colleague leaves the floor, I wonder if he might answer a question, and that is whether some of us on this side of the aisle could also celebrate our colleague, TED’s, appreciation for St. Paddy’s Day, if there are any more of those cookies and punch left in the Democratic cloakroom.

Mr. DURBIN. I am going to check. If there are, we will bring some across because I know TED would do that himself.

Mr. KYL. I thank my colleague.

NOMINATION OF DAN ROONEY TO BE AMBASSADOR OF IRELAND

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I want to speak about a very happy and positive topic, something that is close to my heart but I think also close to the heart of a lot of Americans. Today, we have the double benefit of it being not only St. Patrick’s day, but in my case, as a Pennsylvanian and one of Irish descent, I had the great news announced today by the President of the United States that Dan Rooney—from the great Rooney family of Pittsburgh, owner of the Pittsburgh Steelers and a great friend of the people of Ireland, who has been active in the peace process, as has his family for a generation or more with their time, their effort, their money, and their wisdom—has been nominated to be Ambassador to Ireland. He is a Pittsburgher and a Pennsylvanian, and we are so very

proud today to be able to report that for those who haven’t yet heard the news. I will work, as a member of the Committee on Foreign Relations, to get him confirmed because we should confirm him.

Dan Rooney is well known as the owner of the Steelers, the Super Bowl champs several times over in the last generation, and that is wonderful that he is, but he is a son of Pittsburgh, a very humble man, a very decent, kind, caring, and compassionate man, someone who has the kind of integrity and the kind of commitment to service you would want in an ambassador to any country but especially one such as Ireland. Pennsylvania has a pretty significant percentage of its population that traces its ancestry to that small island, and across the ages we have been proud of that connection, that affinity we have for the people of Ireland. In this case, if all goes as it should with the confirmation—and I am sure it will—we will have a son of Pittsburgh, a son of Pennsylvania, a resident of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania serving as Ambassador to Ireland.

Dan is someone who not only has the character and integrity and commitment to his country, and his concern about the Irish people, but he is also someone who has broad experience in running a major organization and motivating people to meet goals. There is so much that our country can do together with the people of Ireland. That country will see, if it does not already know, what we have always seen in the character and the decency and the strength and experience of Dan Rooney. So we are very proud today that President Obama made that announcement, especially for someone who has the kind of character and commitment to public service that Dan Rooney has.

One final note about the celebration today of St. Patrick’s Day. There are a lot of reasons to celebrate, even in the context of some of the recent violence in Ireland. There are more reasons than not to celebrate the enduring peace of Ireland, even in the midst of that setback, even in the midst of that violence. We have a lot to be thankful for, those of us who care about that kind of peace—one of the longest conflicts in the history of the world brought to resolution back in the 1990s. George Mitchell and the Clinton administration worked very hard on this, and I know the Obama administration will be equally committed to making sure that peace endures.

As we are thinking today about Ireland and thinking about St. Patrick’s Day and thinking about the bond between our two countries—and earlier today I heard Senator DURBIN speak of the senior Senator from Massachusetts, Mr. KENNEDY, for a whole variety of reasons—I think of TED KENNEDY as someone who spent a lot of his time in the Senate working on peace issues the world over but in particular working on the peace process in Northern Ireland. Over his lifetime of service in the