

ran deficits during his term of nearly \$7 trillion. The cumulative Federal debt more than doubled under President George W. Bush, who inherited a surplus from President Clinton. It went up from \$5.8 trillion in 2001 to \$12.7 trillion in 2009.

At the end of the Bush administration, the economy faced the worst crisis since the Great Depression, the recession we are now encountering. That is what President Obama inherited when he was sworn in 9 months ago. Back in February, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that, assuming continuation of budget policies that were in effect in January of this year, the Federal budget deficit would average more than \$1 trillion each year over the next 10 years and would climb higher in later years. That estimate was developed based completely on the budget policies that the current President inherited from the previous President. So to argue that the Nation's fiscal woes should be all laid at the doorstep of President Obama overlooks the obvious. Given the soaring debts and woeful economy he inherited, it certainly is not defensible.

America will run a fiscal deficit this year and it will be a large deficit, there is no question about it. In an economy such as this, where there is so little private sector demand, we have tried to create through stimulus packages, re-investment, and recovery good jobs and economic activity that will revitalize our economy.

Why did President Bush have such record-breaking deficits during his tenure? I can tell you that he was the first President in the history of the United States to call for tax cuts in the midst of a war—in fact, in the midst of two wars. Giving tax cuts to the wealthiest people in the Nation during a war is counterintuitive. A war is an added expense to a nation, over and above the ordinary costs of government, and to cut revenue sources by giving tax cuts to those in higher income categories drove us deeper and deeper into deficit.

In addition, President Bush during his term passed the Medicare Prescription Drug Program. I think it was a good program, although there were changes I certainly would have made before I would vote for it. But the fact is that the President did not pay for it. It was added to the deficit which the current President has inherited. It is little wonder then that the debt grew dramatically during President George Bush's time in office.

Having said all of this, we have to do something serious about this debt. I think we have to focus on putting this economy back on its feet, getting people back to work, making sure that businesses have credit, making certain that the money spent by our government is spent well, without waste. Those are certainly monumental tasks for us to face. But to say that this health care reform is going to add to the deficit is to overlook the obvious. President Obama has told Members of

Congress: Don't send me a health care reform bill if it adds to the deficit. The Senate Finance Committee bill that passed this week did not add to the deficit. In fact, it reduced the deficit over a 10-year period of time. So we have taken President Obama's admonition seriously.

In a week or two, we will start the debate over the future of health care in this Nation with the understanding that whatever we do has to be paid for, that we cannot leave it as a debt to future generations. It is an awesome responsibility and challenge we face. It is one I think we are up to, that the American people would feel Congress had dropped the ball and had failed if we do not end up with health care reform. We have a lot of issues to work out among us. I hope Senator SNOWE on the Republican side will be joined by other Senators who can in good faith join in trying to solve some of these awesome problems we face, problems we have inherited. It is a major responsibility and one we accept with the leadership of the President to help us find that solution.

I yield the floor and 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. SESSIONS. 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. SESSIONS. Madam President, the American people are rightly very concerned about the reckless spending being conducted in Washington spending that has resulted in huge national deficits. People sometimes think that Republicans and Democrats are just bickering, but the truth is that we have never had deficits such as these in the history of our country—perhaps only during the peak of World War II, when we were in a life-and-death struggle with millions of men and women in combat from one end of the globe to the other.

The fiscal year 2010 deficit is \$1.4 trillion. It is predicted to average \$1 trillion for the next decade, without relief in the outyears. People often ask me: When are we going to start paying it back? There is no plan to do so. There is not even any plan to reduce the size of the deficit. In years 8, 9, 10, we are talking about over \$900 billion in annual deficits. Interest today on our total debt is \$170 billion, will rise to \$800 billion in 1 year and that is just the interest on the money we must borrow in order to carry these deficits that are not being reduced in the outyears. It is unthinkable.

A lot of people think that the high deficit is due to costs from a health care reform bill. Health care reform will add to the deficit, but is not cur-

rently counted in the numbers I referenced because the Congressional Budget Office did its scoring before any health care bill was written. We don't have a final bill, so CBO couldn't score it accurately anyway.

The public debt will go from \$5 trillion to \$11.7 trillion in 5 years and triple to \$17 trillion in 10 years, tripling the national debt. The total debt from the founding of the American Republic will be tripled. That is a big deal.

My colleague, Senator DURBIN, and our Democratic colleagues have taken great pleasure in attacking President Bush. I was critical of President Bush's spending, but his average deficit was \$250 billion, which was too much and big. However, this year's deficit is going to be \$1.4 trillion. That is the deficit as of September 30, for this fiscal year. And we will carry an average deficit \$900 billion annually in the coming years. You can blame the origins of the deficit on President Bush if you want to, but President Obama's budget for the next 10 years, scored by the Congressional Budget Office, continues to score deficits at \$900 billion. Regardless, we are spending too much money. Republicans are guilty of it, and so are the Democrats. They promised to do better after they got elected this time, but I haven't seen any progress, frankly.

The media has reported recently that the valuation of the Finance Committee's health care bill by the Congressional Budget Office was quite positive. They said—you may have heard the phrase—that it was deficit neutral. How did that happen? How can you add millions of people to the rolls of insured, and subsidize insurance for low-income people, all without having a cost? We need to examine that.

The CBO says the Finance Committee bill would cost \$829 billion over 10 years, but they say it is not going to increase the deficit. It will increase the number of people covered but not increase the deficit.

The Washington Post wrote:

The Finance Committee's bill is the only legislation on the table that meets Obama's objectives [. . .] all for less than \$900 billion over 10 years, and without adding to the deficit.

So that has been the spin. That has been the statement from the media.

The President said in his September address to Congress that he would not sign a health care reform bill that adds one dime to the deficit. Senator BAUCUS, the Finance Committee chairman, said:

Our balanced approach in the Finance Committee to health reform has paid off once again.

He said the bill was "a smart investment on the federal balance sheet." Would that it were so, but that is not an accurate statement. The American people know you cannot expand coverage for millions of the uninsured without incurring cost. There is no

such thing as a free lunch. Money borrowed has to be repaid. If you make obligations to expand the federal government's role in our health care system, you must have the money to back it up.

So how can the CBO make such a report? It is not because they are dishonest. It is because they scored the bill the Washington way, and the bill was written by Members of this body and staff who understand the Washington way. They write the bill in such a way to hide its true cost. Republicans have done this in the past, but we are reaching new levels of it today.

Under the Baucus plan, true costs are hidden. The bill's requirements that all individuals have insurance does not fully phase in, for example, until 2014. However, new fees on insurers, medical device companies, drug manufacturers and cuts to hospitals and doctors take effect almost immediately. For example, hospitals will take cuts and see more patients beginning in 2010, but individuals are not required to have insurance coverage until 2014. If you are an insurance company, you will face increased taxes and new annual fees beginning in 2010, but again—individuals are not required to have insurance until 2014. Doctors' pay is kept stable in 2010, but under the Finance Committee legislation, doctors are expected to take a 25-percent pay cut beginning in 2011.

Why have we been engaging in these budget gimmicks? Both parties have been guilty of doing this. Why don't we just make the difficult decisions? We have succeeded in balancing the budget in the past. But under the Sustainable Growth Rate formula as it applies today, our physicians the people that take care of us—would take a 25-percent cut in 2011. So, Congress fixes the formula, so to speak. We now call it the doctors' fix. We arrange for a short-term solution that keeps doctors' pay from being cut, but do not address the larger problem. If Congress were to fix the physician pay formula for 10 years, we would have about \$300 billion more in costs to figure in to our budget as a deficit. The proposal that came out of the Finance Committee proposes to raise the doctors' fees for 1 year. It does not propose what is absolutely necessary: a 10-year fix for doctor pay. So, the Chairman acts as if an update to doctor pay will not happen in 2011 so that the bill does not have to reflect the true costs. And Congress will update doctor pay, as it has every year since 2002.

The bottom line is this: the true costs of the Finance Committee bill will not begin until the new provisions are all phased in in 2014.

The Senate Budget Committee estimates—and I am a member of the committee—show that the Finance Committee bill cost for 2014 to 2023 is actually \$1.8 trillion. So although CBO says that it costs \$829 billion from 2010 to 2019, if you look at numbers from 2014 to 2023, the cost is \$1.8 trillion—twice

as much—because the full benefits and expenses don't kick in until then that period.

Budget gimmicks used to offset the bill are misleading. This is not an honest way to represent the bill's costs, and it is designed for political reasons. It is designed to make the score look better than it is and to hide the true cost of enacting this legislation.

Let me use a chart.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has used the existing time limit.

Mr. SESSIONS. I ask unanimous consent for 3 additional minutes.

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

Mr. SESSIONS. The Senate Finance Committee bill is paid for in a number of ways. Perhaps one of the most unjustified claims is that we are going to produce \$404 billion in cuts to Medicare and Medicaid to fund an entirely new program.

First, it is doubtful that Congress will actually vote to cut \$400 billion from Medicaid and Medicare. However, CBO must assume we are going to cut it because that it included in the Finance Committee bill. CBO also assumed in their budget that we were going to raise a lot of tax money by being more efficient in tax collections last year, but those new collections did not materialize either. The IRS said they wouldn't get them, and they were right. Our number one priority, if we were to somehow make Medicaid and Medicare more efficient and more honest and more effective and more productive and save \$300 billion, that money should stay in Medicare and Medicaid. Medicare is going broke. We know that to be true. Medicare experts and the trustees issued a dire warning that unless measures are taken to shore up the program, it will be insolvent by 2017. We have known that for a long time. These \$400 billion in cuts is very unlikely to happen. The rest of these basically are new taxes. I do not have time to go into them now.

But imagine this scenario: your family is running in a shortfall and you do not have enough money for your business and you have agreed that you would take on a Saturday job to make more income, would it be smart to buy a new car? You have a debt. You are trying to pay it down.

You take on more taxes, take on another job to bring in more income, but, in the midst of that, you start a new spending program? That is exactly what the Finance Committee bill proposes. Instead of getting Medicare on a sound footing, this bill raises taxes to create a new program. Supporters act like we should be thankful because it is deficit neutral, they say. That is not accurate. I know it, and every Senator in this body ought to know it if they have been around here very long.

I am sorry about where we are headed. This sort of scoring is the kind of flimflam financial management that has put us on the road to tripling the debt of the United States in 10 years. It

is an abomination. Our children will be paying interest on our debts for the rest of their lives. Indeed, the interest on our national debt today is \$170 billion. In 10 years, CBO says it will be \$800 billion a year. Yet we spend only \$100 billion a year on education, by contrast.

So I say, somehow we have to slow down, make some difficult choices, and recognize that we do not have the money to do everything we would like to do. We do not have the money, and Congress must be more serious and more committed to improving Medicare, saving the program, and not going hog wild with new programs that we do not have the money to fund.

I thank the Chair for allowing me to go over and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for 20 minutes.

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

THE DEFICIT

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I know my colleague from South Dakota is waiting. I will try not to consume the entire 20 minutes. But let me first talk about deficit for a moment, since my colleague from Alabama described that.

I do not think there is anyone in here who takes a look at the fiscal policy we are on—and have been on for a long time—and feels very comfortable about it. It is not sustainable and we have to change it. But I do want to say this. It was not too long ago that this country went to war and, at the same time, cut taxes and did not pay for a penny of the war. In fact, even now we have people saying: Let's send 40,000 more troops to Afghanistan. I do not hear anybody suggesting we pay for that. What is that going to cost?

I will talk next week about my interest in what is happening in Afghanistan. I have been there. I have some real concerns about sending a lot of additional troops to Afghanistan and about our vital national interests. But let me say, whether it is fighting a war or deciding to send 40,000 more troops to another country, it costs money. Is everybody here willing to pay for it? Anybody willing to pay for it?

We have talked about this for years. We are in the middle of a war. We send men and women to the battlefield, and the fact is, not a penny of it has been paid for. In the previous administration, they insisted on tax cuts and pursuing a war strategy in Iraq and sending troops to Afghanistan and not paying for a penny of it. That also results in Federal budget deficits, and we have to resolve them.

The fact is, we cannot continue to describe a level of government the American people are unwilling or unable to pay for, and we have to get this fiscal policy under some control. Republicans