

to the national debt will be doing so in a fiscally irresponsible way, and Republicans who insist on passing it without adding to the debt are being responsible.

The fact is, this debate is not about unemployment insurance. There is no debate in the Senate about whether we should pass a bill. Everyone agrees we should. This debate is about whether, in extending those benefits, we should add to the debt.

If Democrats were as concerned about passing this bill as they say they are, they would find a way to do it without adding to the debt. After all, there is no law that says we are required to exacerbate one crisis in an effort to alleviate another. Most Americans I talk to think a \$13 trillion debt is one crisis we cannot afford to put off any longer.

If Republicans have done anything wrong in this debate, it was to underestimate how committed Democrats are to spending money we do not have. Given the choice to extend these benefits without adding to the debt or allowing them to expire, Democrats chose the latter on five separate occasions. They do not seem to appreciate the fact that by adding to the national debt, they are increasing the long-term burden on everyone—the unemployed, the employed and our children and grandchildren who will have to pay for it.

The President likes to point out that Congress has added to the debt in years past. What he does not mention is we were not in the middle of a debt crisis then. We were not being lectured by the French about the need to cut back on our spending. People were not rioting in Greece. We did not have a President who came into office with a list of legislative priorities that would double the national debt in 5 years and triple it in 10.

The President also says Republicans are playing politics in this debate. But by pointing the finger at Republicans, he is attempting to deflect attention not only from his own party's unwillingness to take the debt seriously, he is attempting to deflect attention from Democrats' own fiscal recklessness and its potential consequences for our future.

None of us likes to see good people struggling to find work. We all empathize with the people the President highlighted yesterday at the White House. But let's not forget the role this administration's own policies have played in all this.

If ever there was an indictment of this administration's economic agenda, it was yesterday's press conference. The administration asked taxpayers to foot the bill on a \$1 trillion stimulus that he claimed would create 4 million jobs. A year and a half later, the President is standing with three chronically unemployed Americans, some of the victims of a 9.5-percent unemployment rate, asking taxpayers for another \$34 billion in deficit spending to continue

paying their unemployment benefits. I think most Americans see the connection here.

The President also tried to score political points yesterday by mischaracterizing the debate over the small business bill. Here is another bill that both parties support. Yet the President would have the American people believe that somehow we are trying to hold it up just because the majority leader would rather move on to some of his other legislative priorities than have a vote on a couple of amendments to this bill that would help to create more jobs.

So either the President is misinformed about what has been going on over here or he is deliberately mischaracterizing the situation. The fact is, the Senate is already on this bill and both sides have offered improvements. If the President wants to criticize someone for slowing it down, he should point the finger at his own party for repeatedly taking it off the floor, which brings me to the supplemental war spending bill.

I will remind my colleagues the Secretary of Defense has indicated that failure to pass this bill before the August recess could actually keep our soldiers and marines from getting paid, a point he reiterated in a letter to the majority leader, sent yesterday.

So what is the holdup?

Some Democrats in the House do not want to pass this funding for our troops unless the Senate agrees to tack on billions in unrelated domestic spending. It is time for House Democrats to get serious and stop holding our troops hostage. Let's strip this unrelated funding and pass this war funding bill.

Yesterday, the Democratic chairman of the House Armed Services Committee made it clear that he recognizes the need for the Senate to pass the troop funding bill quickly and get it to the President's desk.

Every Member of this Chamber should unite behind this goal. The Defense Department finds itself in the last weeks of the fiscal year with little flexibility to meeting funding shortfalls of the operations and pay for our forces in the field. That leaves it to us to act, and I suggest we do so this week.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will now be in a period of morning business until 12:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first 30

minutes and the Republicans controlling the next 30 minutes.

The Senator from Illinois.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, this afternoon is a historic moment in the history of this great Chamber. Our beloved and now departed Senator from West Virginia, Robert C. Byrd, will be succeeded in office with a temporary appointment from West Virginia, and we will swear in his successor at 2:15 this afternoon. A few minutes later, the Senate will take up a historic measure. It is a question of whether we should provide unemployment benefits to the millions of Americans who have lost their job, through no fault of their own, and are victims of this recession.

In my home State, 115,000 people have fallen off the unemployment rolls while we have debated whether to extend unemployment benefits. Across America, 1.2 million Americans have lost basic unemployment benefits.

What do these benefits mean to these families out of work? Literally, bread on the table; literally, whether the lights go on when you flick the switch; literally, whether they have a roof over their heads.

This did not use to be a political issue. We did not get involved in a partisan debate about unemployment benefits when it came to other Presidents. But under this President, Barack Obama, the Republicans have decided to take a stand and the stand says this: When it comes to people who are victims of this recession, we will not help them unless we find some way to add a new tax or cut some spending in other areas.

That was never the standard before. We viewed this as an economic emergency, which we responded to, to get America back on its feet.

Those who are involved in watching our budget and our deficit and our economy, such as Bob Bixby, the president of the Concord Coalition, puts it very clearly. Mr. Bixby says:

As a deficit hawk, I wouldn't worry about extending unemployment benefits. It is not going to add to the long-term structural deficit, and it does address a serious need. I just feel like unemployment benefits wandered onto the wrong street corner at the wrong time, and now they are getting mugged.

That is Bob Bixby of the Concord Coalition.

What about David Brooks? I respect David Brooks, a conservative Republican writer but a thinker. Here is what he says, in writing in the New York Times last week about unemployment benefits:

Well, there's a few short-term things you can do [about this economy]. First, extend unemployment insurance; that's a foolish place to begin budget-balancing.

David Brooks knows what we all know: a dollar handed to an unemployed person is spent almost immediately, recirculates through the economy, and creates \$1.60 in economic activity. It is the best way to create