

access to care and protection from poverty that President Truman envisioned 65 years ago, and Medicare and Medicaid do not only protect seniors from poverty, they also protect those seniors' children. Forty-six years ago, middle-class families often spent themselves into the poorhouse honoring their commitment to their moms and dads. Today's seniors and their children have the security that Medicare and Medicaid will be there to honor that commitment—to providing health care and nursing home care when they need it.

But Medicare doesn't only save American seniors money, it saves their lives. In 1964, just before Medicare was signed into law, seniors lived an average of not quite 70 years. Today the national average is more than 78 years. There is, perhaps, no achievement greater than that. This law literally extended Americans' life expectancy. Forty-six years ago, before signing Medicare into law, President Johnson made this vow:

No longer will this Nation refuse the hand of justice to those who have given a lifetime of service and wisdom and labor to the progress of this progressive country.

Democrats intend to honor that solemn vow of President Johnson. But today Medicare is under siege. Republicans would trade away the health and safety of today's seniors for the sake of tax breaks for billionaires, wealthy oil companies, and corporations that ship jobs overseas. They would trade that sense of security, that "hand of justice" Johnson described, for the sake of tax breaks on their corporate jets and their yachts. Their ideological budget would end Medicare as we know it, once again subjecting seniors to the rising costs of health care. Democrats refuse to let that happen.

A lot has changed since 1966 and that law. New technologies and medicines are there for diabetes, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's. We now have hip replacements and chemotherapy, all pioneered in the late 1960s, and they are now performed in the United States every single day. Medicine has changed for the better.

But one thing has not changed. Seniors need Medicare. In fact, the rising cost of health care today means seniors need Medicare's protection more now than ever. That is why we will never stop fighting to preserve this successful program. As long as I am in the Senate, I will oppose Republican plans to weaken or undermine it, because the Republicans' plan to weaken Medicare is an idea whose time will never come.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

#### BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, over the past several days the American people have watched a serious debate unfold right here in Washington about our Nation's debt and about the future of our economy, and for many the debate has been extremely illuminating. It has done a lot to clarify where the two parties stand. Both sides agree that our deficits and our debt are unsustainable. But beyond that, the differences are stark.

Republicans believe if you increase spending to the point that you can no longer pay the bills, then you need to find a way to cut costs. Democrats seem to think if you increase spending to the point that you can no longer pay the bills, you need to find other people to pick up the tab. This is a fundamental difference between the two parties.

Republicans think Democrats should be held accountable for the way they have mismanaged the national checkbook over the past 2 years and Democrats seem to think that taxpayers should take the hit.

Democrats spend beyond their means and now they expect a bailout from the taxpayers. That is what this debate is all about. It is about holding Washington accountable, for a change. It is about drawing a line in the sand and saying, no, the taxpayers will not bail out politicians. It is about refusing to subsidize the Democrats' irresponsible spending habits another day. Democrats have shown through their reckless spending over the past 2 years that they are not at all concerned about our fiscal future. They should not expect to be rewarded for that.

The entire Democratic approach to this debate has been astonishing, really. I mean, here we are in the midst of two national crises: 14 million unemployed and more than \$14 trillion in debt—14 million unemployed and \$14 trillion in debt—chronic unemployment and record deficits and debt. And what are the Democrats proposing? Higher taxes and more spending. In the middle of a jobs crisis they want to slam already struggling businesses with a massive tax hike. In the middle of a debt crisis they want to borrow and spend more money as a solution to the problem. This is not a negotiation, it is a parody.

In a discussion about reducing the debt, they want to increase spending. Let me say that again. In a discussion about reducing the debt, they want to increase spending. In the middle of a jobs crisis they want to raise taxes—even as they claim to support job creation. Which is it? Yesterday the President went to a manufacturing plant to

tout jobs. Yet even as he was speaking, his administration was looking to saddle manufacturing companies, including the one he was visiting yesterday, with billions of dollars in new taxes.

According to a letter from a group of trade associations, including the National Association of Manufacturers, this particular tax would be "devastating" to manufacturers. The President himself said as recently as 6 months ago that keeping taxes where they are enables businesses to hire more workers. Six months ago the President said that. In other words, he was saying that raising taxes leads to fewer jobs. So he can call for tax hikes but he cannot call for tax hikes and job creation. It is one or the other—six months ago making the argument that tax hikes lose jobs; today out touting jobs on the one hand and pushing for higher taxes on the other. He can't have it both ways.

The Democrats' spending spree has brought us to the brink of an economic calamity and now they are telling taxpayers they will not do anything to prevent it unless the taxpayers hand over more money in the form of tax hikes. And they have the nerve to call their critics immoral. I want to know what you call spending trillions more than you have and then expecting others to pick up the tab; that is what this is all about, spending trillions more than you have and expecting somebody else to pick up the tab.

Does anybody seriously propose tax hikes as a solution to a job crisis? Who proposes more spending as a solution to a debt crisis? Who thinks if we raise the debt limit now without enacting serious spending cuts and meaningful reforms first it will lead to greater fiscal discipline later? There is an important principle at stake in this debate. It is not about rich versus poor. It is not about an election. It is about whether Washington will ever be held accountable for its mistakes. That is why Republicans refuse to let the taxpayers take the hit when it comes to reducing the debt, and that is why all 47 Republicans in the Senate support a balanced budget amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The debate we have been having over the past few days shows more than ever why we need a balanced budget amendment in Congress. A balanced budget amendment would require that lawmakers stop spending money we don't have. When we come back after July 4, we will fight for an opportunity to vote for it. Broke or balanced, that is the choice. The American people should know where their Senators stand on this issue of accountability. Senators can talk all day long about the importance of balancing the books and living within our means, but a vote in favor of the balanced budget amendment will show we actually mean it. A vote against it will show that they don't.

Look, no one denies that both parties are guilty of spending beyond our means. But this White House has taken

wasteful spending to new heights, and its allies in Congress are all too quick to defend it. The last time the Senate voted on a balanced budget amendment, the government's annual deficit was about \$100 billion, the national debt was about \$5.5 trillion, and it failed by a single vote—a single vote. Today, the annual deficit is \$1.6 trillion, and the national debt is \$14.5 trillion.

The President and his party need to be held accountable. The fiscal mess they have helped create calls for rehab. That is what the balanced budget amendment would provide—a spending straitjacket. No more blank checks. If Democrats won't pass a budget of their own, it is time Americans impose a budget on them. Americans are not about to let Democrats use another crisis as an excuse to expand the size of government.

If ever there were a time for Washington to pass through a crisis and come out smaller on the other side, it is right now. Republicans are totally united in this effort. All we need is 20 Democrats to join us. Washington should be forced to make the kinds of difficult choices the rest of the country has to make. Lawmakers should have to make the case for a spending increase before they approve it. Never again can they just spend away and then demand in the teeth of a crisis that taxpayers cough up the money—as I said earlier, the taxpayer bailout.

It is time to put the American people back at the helm of our ship of state, and if that is what this vote achieves, then this debate we are having this summer will have been well worth it. If Washington is forced to finally reform its ways, then one day we will look back and say that the American people won this debate, and we will say the balanced budget amendment was just the thing we needed to get the house in order. Broke or balanced, that is the choice before us.

I look forward to this vote. The American people clearly want it. Let's hold Washington accountable, and let's begin to restore power to the people who sent us here not to do our own will but to carry out theirs. That is the principle at stake. It is about the kind of government we want to have—a government of the people or a government above the people. That is the choice. Much depends on the outcome.

Madam President, 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 be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally di-

vided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the second half.

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to engage in a colloquy with my Republican colleagues.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, today we are beginning what might prove one of the most consequential debates in American history. The American people are demanding that Congress debate and pass a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. They are going to get that debate, and I am confident that if Congressmen and Senators listen to their constituents, the citizens of this Nation are going to have the opportunity to ratify a balanced budget amendment this year. All 47 Republican Members of the Senate are of one mind on the need for a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. We have listened to our constituents who are pleading with us to take action that will permanently resolve our debt crisis and keep us from getting into this situation again.

The situation is a disaster. We all know the numbers: three straight trillion-dollar-plus deficits; \$14.5 trillion in debt and rising every day; \$62 trillion in total liability that this government owns. Since Democrats last passed a budget—that was over 790 days ago—our national debt has risen by \$3.2 trillion, and now the administration is asking for more.

We simply cannot do this anymore. Madam President, 100 percent of our tax revenues are spent on mandatory spending and interest on the debt. Every other penny is borrowed. The money is simply not there to finance a government of this size, and everyone knows this, although not everyone will admit it. They know deficit spending and skyrocketing debt have come to an end. Our Nation's current debt-to-GDP ratio is 95 percent. Countries with debt above 95 percent of GDP have growth that is 1 percent below normal, resulting in a loss of 1 million jobs. Our debt is a lead weight around the neck of the economy.

But in the current negotiations over the debt limit, the administration insists that it is Republicans who, by refusing to pass an increase of the debt limit that does not include meaningful efforts to address our fiscal situation, are holding back the economic recovery and undercutting the stock and bond markets. This has things exactly backward. The markets understand that our long-term deficit projections are moving toward a full-blown debt crisis. The markets understand that we are currently on the glidepath to Greece. The markets would respond like gangbusters to spending cuts,

and a balanced budget amendment that brings our long-term fiscal problems under control.

I am more convinced than ever that a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution is essential if we are to right our fiscal ship. This is not the first time we have been down this road, but the stakes could not be higher this time, and the amendment could not be better designed to address the crisis. Our amendment is not just an amendment for fiscal balance, it is an amendment that takes on the root cause of our current debt crisis; that is, government spending. Our amendment requires a balanced budget. It establishes a spending cap of 18 percent of GDP, and it establishes supermajority requirements for tax increases or future debt-limit increases.

We will hear a number of tired arguments against the BBA. Its opponents will say the amendment is not properly vetted. We have been talking about the balanced budget amendment for decades, and if we had passed it back in 1997, when it fell by 1 vote short of being sent to the States for ratification, we would not be in the mess we are in today.

They will say it stacks the deck by requiring spending cuts rather than tax increases to balance the budget. This is an issue I will address at length, but the American people understand the solution to a spending crisis is not to give the government more money to spend, especially this government.

They will say a balanced budget amendment is unnecessary and Congress just needs to do its job. But we have heard this over and over before, and the American people know that waiting for Congress to balance the budget and shrink the size of government without a constitutional amendment is less fruitful than waiting for Godot.

They will say the spending cuts required as a result of this BBA will hurt children and the elderly. But the real harm to our children will be when we hand them a future of national indebtedness and dim economic prospects, and the real harm to the elderly will be the coming bankruptcy of the Nation's entitlement programs—the guaranteed result of the President's failure to lead on entitlement reform.

Finally, they will say the Constitution should not be amended. I agree that it should not be amended lightly, but the Founders themselves expected that changing circumstances and national emergencies would demand amendments to the Constitution from time to time.

The American people understand that this is one of those times. In this country, the people are sovereign, the Constitution is their Constitution, and they are demanding that Congress pass a balanced budget amendment and send it to them and the States for ratification.

My hope is that the party of Thomas Jefferson will listen to their constituents and follow their founder's lead,