

minute errands in preparation for Christmas, one stop on the list almost always includes the grocery store.

Like many other families our Christmas traditions include baking cookies. On Christmas Eve we get together with extended family for lunch. Many holiday memories are centered around the time spent sitting at the table with family and friends.

The unfortunate reality for more and more people, is that those memories are becoming more distant as more Americans than ever are having difficulty putting food on the table. In fact, recent studies show one in six Americans are food deprived.

Despite Arkansas's reputation as a leader in agriculture production, Arkansans are struggling to provide nutritious, healthy meals for their families.

What is most concerning is that nearly 25 percent of Arkansas kids go to bed hungry. That gives Arkansas the unfortunate distinction of having the worst rate of childhood hunger in the country.

While I believe Congress should be working identifying a range of legislative improvements or reforms that can be made in Federal policy to help fight hunger, Washington can't help solve this problem alone.

This requires community involvement. Fortunately, we are blessed to have help at the local level from a wide variety of organizations in Arkansas, and nationwide, that make it their mission to fight hunger.

As a co-chair of the Senate Hunger Caucus, Senators DURBIN, LUGAR, CASEY, MORAN, BROWN of Ohio, and myself put politics aside to raise awareness and recognize the great work underway in our states addressing food insecurity.

We call this effort the Hour for Hunger. Our initiative encourages all Members of Congress to dedicate one hour during this holiday season to highlight the commitments of national, state and local organizations to fight hunger.

Last Friday, I had the opportunity to visit the Samaritan Community Center in Rogers, Arkansas. For more than 20 years, this organization has lent a helping hand to the hungry through soup kitchens, food pantries, "Snackpacks for Kids" and a variety of other initiatives.

This help is needed now more than ever. The economy is forcing more people to rely on the services of Samaritan Community Center. In just three years, there has been more than a 50 percent increase in clients.

This is the story with similar organizations throughout Arkansas. In a segment that aired last month, CNN focused on the extent of the hunger problem in Arkansas's second largest city, Fort Smith. Ken Kupchick, marketing director for the River Valley Regional Food Bank in Fort Smith, told CNN some heart-wrenching stories encountered while helping those in need.

Ken spoke of a mother who used to volunteer at a food pantry and is now in need of the organization's services due to mounting medical bills for her children. He recounted a story of an elderly lady who went from financial security to sorting through the dumpster garbage at the local grocery store after her husband passed away and her monthly income disappeared.

Unfortunately, similar stories can be heard throughout our State. Community-based efforts like those in Fort Smith are making a difference to address hunger and malnourishment.

We are seeing it across the state of Arkansas. Last week, the NBC affiliate KARK in Little Rock spent the week urging viewers to donate to the Arkansas Food Bank. The Greater Good Week of Giving donation drive will undoubtedly provide many blessings to many families this holiday season.

It's painfully clear that our current economic environment is intensifying our hunger issues in Arkansas and across the country. The fact is, we don't have to look far to see how hunger hurts.

I believe hunger is a solvable problem but it requires us all working together. Please consider what you can do to help neighbors in need, not just during this holiday season, but all year long.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Alabama.

#### THE ECONOMY

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, we are, as a nation, facing difficult financial times, and I for one believe it is true that the middle class in America is suffering economically to a degree that is unusual. It needs to be thought about, it needs to be addressed.

I have a number of ideas about what we should do, and they don't include raising taxes and spreading the money around. I don't believe that is the right direction for the country to go. That is essentially the view of President Obama. As he says he is for the middle class, he taxes people at even higher levels and would do those kinds of government programs that he believes will work.

At a most fundamental level, I am convinced the greatest thing we can do to strengthen America—strengthen us financially, strengthen job creation for the middle class—would be to do the things that allow growth in the private sector. There are a lot of things we can do that will not cost this Treasury a dime.

Indeed, one of the greatest threats to the American economy is the debt that hangs over us like a cloud. It is inhibiting growth and investment and prosperity. We have to get this Nation on a sustainable path, not the unsustainable path we are on. I have been disappointed, frankly, at the leadership of the President. He has not understood this. He believes that the way to do it is through governmental borrowing,

taxing, and spending. That is not the way to get out of this fix.

One of the most dramatic things that are coming up before us today is the Keystone Pipeline. This is precisely the kind of project this Congress could take action on to ensure that it occurs because it will create lots of jobs, create wealth, make us more secure as a nation, and help bring down the cost of energy. Low-cost energy is the best possible way to create even more jobs in America. We compete in a global marketplace, and the extent to which our industries can have cheaper energy, they can hire more people, make more widgets, and pay more taxes to the U.S. Government and to States, cities, and counties.

The construction of the Keystone Pipeline would run from Alberta, Canada, to Texas refineries along the gulf coast. It adds a number of miles of pipeline, although it will also use existing pipelines that are in place now. We have thousands of miles of pipelines around the United States. Building a pipeline is not unusual. We build them over and over again. Many pipelines run through our State, and they provide the low-cost energy that helps us to be competitive and create jobs.

This construction project alone would add 20,000 American workers, high-paid American workers, jobs not funded by additional debt that we borrow to try to artificially create jobs. They are real construction jobs. Experts tell us it would likely lead to the creation of more than 100,000 jobs overall. This is a significant number.

In addition, as I said, it would make us more energy secure and make us more able to contain the growth in the price of fuel because it would provide a large, competitive source of fuel for America. When fully operational, the pipeline will transport 700,000 barrels a day. That is almost half of the amount of oil the United States currently imports from the entire Middle East. Mr. President, 700,000 barrels a day is almost exactly the amount of oil we import from Venezuela, and that is not a friendly country to us. Hugo Chavez and his team there are a dangerous threat to the hemisphere. Much of their wealth comes from the oil they sell to the United States. I am not saying that we cannot buy on the world market and that we should not buy from Venezuela, but why in the world would we deny ourselves the right to purchase 700,000 barrels a day from our friend, our fine trading partner, Canada, our neighbor?

There is a strategic political interest of significance here too. How will the Canadians feel if we reject this pipeline when great effort, time, and years of investment and study have gone into it?

This plan to build a pipeline is supported by a bipartisan coalition, Democrats and Republicans, including many Democratic Governors, such as Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer, along with a number of Democratic Senators

and Congressmen. It is not a partisan issue. Seven Governors of States that will house the pipeline have come out to voice their support. Each State through which the pipeline will pass is supportive of the pipeline. Those encouraging the pipeline also include labor unions, such as the Teamsters, that together represent about 25 million workers. Remember, this is a jobs program that will create high-paying jobs, and many will be for union workers. Yet the President has blocked the pipeline construction for some time, deferring a decision now until after the next election. Many argue that it is not hard to conclude that this is a political decision and an attempt to avoid alienating the liberal anti-energy environmentalists or those who favor the pipeline, such as his union supporters.

I don't know the politics of it. All I know is that I cannot find a single sound reason not to proceed. I know it would be tremendously economically beneficial to America. We must address the true, structural, long-term problems that are hammering our economy and middle-class workers in America, robbing them of opportunity.

We had before the environmental committee a couple of days ago a witness from Alabama—Van Richey, the CEO at ACIPCO. This is a 100-year-old company where the CEO/owner a number of years ago turned it over to the employees. Mr. Richey testified their number of employees has gone from 4,600 to 2,900, and that the pipe industry in America is down 30 percent—the entire pipe industry. Think about that. These are real jobs. These are people who built their lives around good-paying work at ACIPCO, and over a thousand of them are now not working. I don't know what they are doing. Hopefully, they found something, but it is unlikely to be the kind of solid manufacturing job they had. We must pursue reforms that make our economy stronger and more productive, restoring confidence and allowing for sustained economic job growth.

Consider a few of the biggest challenges we face. One of them is the health care law. Promises were made. The President insisted it would reduce health care costs, but health insurance premiums have increased \$2,200 per family since 2008. The Congressional Budget Office warned us this health care bill was not going to bring down costs, and, in fact, the bill has brought costs up. That is money out of the pockets of American families that they do not have now to spend in the marketplace because it has to be spent on their health insurance. We need to get the government out of dominating and regulating areas of the economy for which they have no experience or ability to operate in an effective way.

Instead of allowing the production of American energy—energy from this country—the President has blocked commonsense energy production while sending stimulus dollars to favored

green corporations that are not producing and are going bankrupt in serious numbers. A recent study found that almost 190,000 new jobs could be created next year if energy production in the Gulf of Mexico, where I live, returned to pre-moratorium levels. Think about that. If we went back to the pre-moratorium levels on production, it would add 190,000 jobs and bring in more American wealth. Instead of having to buy our oil from Canada or Venezuela, it would be our own, keeping our wealth at home and creating jobs at home.

The moratorium was imposed after the oil spill. We had expert testimony in the environment committee there is a new device that has been prepared and is now ready to go that could be put over a blown-out well, such as the one we had, so that in a matter of days it would stop the leak. They eventually did that, using a cap. Instead of 90 or 100 days, within a few days you could cut off a leak like that. It should have been there to begin with, in my opinion. It was a very significant failure of management not to have such a safety device. But it is now available.

I also believe the permitorium—the inability to get permits—has cost us a lot of jobs. Now that the complete ban is over, you can get permits, but they have been slowed down dramatically, and huge rigs, capable of drilling in the deep gulf, have been moved to other places in the world and are not producing. It would have cost United States taxpayers virtually nothing to put an intensive effort into reviewing the dangers in the gulf, doing it quickly, and putting this industry back on track before so many of those production rigs moved abroad.

Also burdensome, intrusive regulations have undermined job creation and hurt small businesses. The average number of rules costing the economy over \$100 million pending during 2001 to 2006 was about 72. Under this administration, the average number is 130. In fact, over 180,000 jobs will be lost each year from 2012 to 2020 as a result of four EPA rules that impact the regulatory structure of the electric industry. These are dramatic events.

It would cost the Treasury of the United States not a dime to not follow through on these dramatic rules, one of which is the boiler MACT rule. I have never heard so much concern from my constituents over that rule. Hopefully, it will be part of the legislation that moves the payroll tax holiday. That legislation would also change the boiler MACT rule. That would be a tremendous relief for the American economy.

The point is, these rules cost the economy, cost jobs, drive up our cost of production, and make it more difficult to be competitive in the world marketplace. We don't need that. Every single rule that is effective needs to be maintained; every single rule that is unnecessary and drives up cost should be eliminated. Yet we are still adding rule after rule, and it is costing jobs.

President Obama has continued to ignore China's abusive currency devaluation process which undermines the rule of law and is decimating American manufacturing. I was pleased to work with my Democratic colleagues in the Senate to pass legislation that would require the government to respond to legitimate complaints of businesses that can prove they have been damaged by the deliberate manipulation of China's currency. You can't have a good trading relationship with a country that is cheating you; that is not playing by the rules. Are we going to sit by year after year and allow factory after factory to be closed because we are unwilling to confront this on some sort of religious, economic, free-trade theory because they sell us cheaper products? If they cause our businesses to lay off thousands of workers or to close down, should we thank them because we get a cheaper product? But how long will it be cheaper?

I don't go for that. I think we need real leadership here. It wouldn't cost the Treasury a dime if we stood up and protected our workers on the world competitive stage; if we backed them up and ensured our businesses have fair trade. We would create jobs without adding to the debt. We would create jobs that pay more taxes and reduce the debt. This trade manipulation and unfairness does enormous damage to the middle class.

The number of U.S. manufacturing sites fell from 397,000 in 2001 to 344,000 in June of 2010. That is a real manufacturing decline. It is not inevitable. In fact, I am convinced we have a chance to have a renaissance in manufacturing in America. If we keep our energy costs down, if we don't have unnecessary regulations, and we create a tax policy that is good, I think we might surprise ourselves on how well we can bounce back. Because the cost of manufacturing in other countries is going up dramatically—and we now have, with our technology, our infrastructure, and our high machinery utilization—we can be competitive in areas we haven't been competitive in before.

Manufacturing employment peaked at 19 million in 1979, with 11.7 million in February of 2011. I don't think this country can be healthy and strong economically, I don't think it can have an effective presence strategically and militarily around the world if we don't have a manufacturing base. I don't see how it can happen. What are people going to do?

They say we will go into the service industry. Well, how many people can make a computer? As a matter of fact, most of these technological advancements, such as our super TVs and computers, are made abroad. It is a competitive world, but we can be more competitive. We can take back some of that manufacturing, I am convinced.

I also believe at a time of high unemployment we need to be sure the immigration laws of this country are enforced. The very idea we should relax

our laws and shouldn't insist they be enforced at a time when we have almost 9 percent unemployment makes no sense to me. We need to get American workers working, not imported workers taking jobs from Americans. It is that simple.

We have to protect our legitimate national interest. If you want to have open borders, I am willing to discuss that and say we should have totally open borders. But if you don't—and no nation in the world does, to my knowledge—then you must create an immigration system that serves your national interest and creates jobs for American citizens wherever possible.

America's \$15 trillion debt is destroying jobs and confidence in the economy. The debt itself is the largest we have ever seen. The annual deficit is the largest we have ever seen. It dwarfs any deficits we have ever had before, and it is continuing year after year.

President Bush, in his last year in office, had the biggest deficit he ever had—\$450 billion. It was one of the largest deficits in the history of the Republic. President Obama's first year in office saw a \$1.4 trillion deficit. It has been \$1.3 trillion or more for the last 3 years.

This year, CBO was predicting the deficit would come in at a tad under \$1 trillion—\$970 billion. But if we pass this tax holiday, we will add \$200 billion to the debt just like that. So next year, we will be at \$1.1-plus trillion, if the Congressional Budget Office's projections are true.

This is a serious matter. The debt is a threat to us. We have to quit running up the debt. We have to quit borrowing so we can spend. That is all this tax holiday is—the government borrowing the money so people don't pay into their pension plan—Social Security. I am uneasy about that. It weakens the moral component of Social Security and it clearly adds to our debt. Social Security is on an unsustainable course. This bill would do nothing to fix the unsustainable course of Social Security. It says we don't put in the money we have been putting in every year for the last 60 years, I suppose. How can that do anything but weaken Social Security? And it absolutely increases our debt and will show up on the score by the Congressional Budget Office.

I am the ranking Republican on the Budget Committee. It is so painful; I would love to be able to support—and I won't say I won't support—this tax holiday. But it is not sound policy in the long run for America. We can't keep chasing after and borrowing money to spend, because the debt is so large. We now have a debt equal to 100 percent of GDP, our gross debt. We have never had anything like this before.

So it is time, indeed, for a middle-class agenda, an agenda that helps and strengthens this country. We don't need more dishonest spending, politicians promising favor, promising to give people something the government doesn't have to give, spending money

we don't have, to try to buy votes with it. We don't need any more of that. The net beneficiary of all this seems to have been the political class, not the middle class.

So what do we need to do? A good, sound program means creating jobs through the private sector, putting a stop to crony capitalism and favoritism, producing more American energy, and making our government leaner and more productive. That is good for the economy: creating a long-term debt reduction plan so that every investor and businessperson and American citizen will say, well, we are on a path now that is sustainable, not on a path that is unsustainable—as every economist has told us; adopting a globally competitive Tax Code, a Tax Code that enhances investment in America, enhances expansion in job creation, not one that inhibits growth and job creation.

We need to confront illegal immigration at the border and at the workplace and serve the national interests. We need to uphold the rules of law in trade and quit acquiescing to those who cheat and manipulate trade rules to their advantage. I don't believe we can sustain that over a long period of time. I do believe that has hammered jobs and manufacturing in America.

We need to eliminate unwise and damaging regulations. Any burden placed on individual Americans or businesses in America that does not pay for itself in benefits should never be imposed. We have too much in that category. Finally, delivering to the good people of this country the honest and responsible government and budget they deserve.

The sad fact is, we have now gone 961 days without a budget. I think that shows the irresponsibility of this Congress. I was disappointed when the Democratic leader in the Senate said it would be foolish to even attempt to bring up a budget this year, and he was not going to do it for the second year. This is really, really dangerous; a country that is suffering the greatest debt and deficits we have ever had, to not have a budget is utterly and totally unacceptable.

I can't imagine a party wanting to be the leader of the Senate that will not even bring to the floor a budget, as required by statute, required by law. The House passed one. They passed a historic budget, a budget that would have altered the debt course of America, put us on a sound path. The Republican leadership in the House summoned their courage and produced a budget that would reduce spending, alter the taxes in America in a way that would create more growth, and brought it forward.

So Senator REID thought he was clever. He knew Democrats wouldn't vote for it because it would actually cut spending, and he brought it up so it could be voted down. But over 40 people voted for it.

I brought up at the same time President Obama's budget—the most irre-

sponsible budget ever submitted, one that would increase taxes but increase spending more and increase debt more than if we didn't have that budget. So I brought it up and said: Well, let's vote on the President's budget. Zero votes, 97 to 0, against that budget.

We need to be sure the people who run this country understand that the American people are not happy with us. How can they be happy? We are borrowing 40 cents of every dollar we spend. We are on an unsustainable debt course, and we don't even have a budget and refuse to bring up one. It is just unthinkable.

We will end up in the last of this session heading into Christmas with some conglomerated-together, massive omnibus bill, a last-minute tax holiday bill, and somehow we will muddle forward and continue spending for the government so it will not close down. But all of this should have been done months ago. There is no reason it has to be held to the last minute except it gives the leader more power to manipulate, and it gives Members of Congress less opportunity to know what is in it. It gives the American people less opportunity to know what is in it.

So I am not happy. I don't think the American people are. I think they are rightfully disappointed with us. Somehow we have to get this country on the right track. It will require tightening our belts. We cannot continue to borrow and spend at this rate.

A lot of people are going to be disappointed that things they hoped to receive they will no longer be able to receive. But the country will not sink into the ocean. It will not. This country is strong. All we have to do is do what they are doing in New Jersey and doing in Alabama, beginning to do in some of the other States that have been deeply in debt, do what Senator WARNER did as Governor of Virginia: manage the economy and balance the budget. I appreciate his leadership in the Senate to try to produce something worthwhile for the Nation.

So we can do better, and we have to do better, and the American people are entitled to it.

I yield the floor, and 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. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### AGRICULTURE

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I know we are all anxious to reach a conclusion on significant legislation that is pending. It determines many things important to Americans and it creates the opportunity for Members of the Senate and the House to spend a little