President has extricated us from Iraq, and we are in the process of leaving Afghanistan.

If you want to know why government spending has gone up so fast, there has been a 64-percent increase in military spending since the budget was last in balance. There was no increase in domestic discretionary spending when you take inflation into account but 64 percent in military spending. That is why spending has gone up. Yet, when they suggest we will cut spending in the sequester, people say: You cannot touch it; it has to continue to grow. I question that. I think we can be safe as a nation and really address the wasteful spending taking place in the Pentagon as well as every other government agency.

Where else is there a growth in government spending? The same analysis by Senator INOUYE says that since the budget was in balance, the expenditures in entitlement spending have gone up 30 percent—30 percent. It is a substantial pool of money. Why? Because yesterday 10,000 Americans reached the age of 65, today another 10,000, tomorrow another 10,000 and every day for the next 18 years as the boomers arrive. To lament the growth in entitlements is to ignore the obvious: we have more people calling on Social Security and Medicare for help. People have paid into these systems for a lifetime and now—I think quite rightfully—expect to be covered by the same programs they have supported for so many years in their working lives.

Is the Senator from Kentucky suggesting that we need to cut back when it comes to eligibility in Social Security and Medicare? That would sure restrain the growth, but it would be fundamentally unfair and unwise to tell people who paid in a lifetime to Social Security and Medicare that now you do not get your benefits.

Let's be honest about the growth in government spending. When you have wars that you do not pay for, when you have entitlement programs created, such as the Medicare prescription Part D, unpaid for, when you have a growth in entitlements just by the demographic growth in America, that accounts for a lot of the increase in spending.

There is one other key element. A large measure of the increase in Federal spending has been increased health care costs, and we estimate that in the next 10 to 20 years, 70 percent of Federal budget outlays will grow because of increased health care costs. We addressed this. We went after the growth in health care costs with the President's ObamaCare—the health care reform bill—in an attempt to contain it and had not one single Republican who would join us in that effort. Not one. We ended up passing it exclusively as a Democratic bill. That is a shame because I think Democrats and Republicans should share the same goal of trying to reduce the increased cost of health care spending.

When it comes to the President's offer, we need a bold approach again. We need to contain the spending costs as we already have, already cutting $1 trillion in spending to date. We need to have revenue sources, which the President has asked for, and we need to look at entitlement programs—I want to be very specific—not entitlement cuts per se but entitlement reform. Untouched, Medicare runs out of money in 12 years. That is a challenge to each and every one of us today—not 12 years from now but today. What will we do in the next year, looking at entitlement programs such as Medicare, to make sure they have a life well beyond 12 years? I think that is a responsibility we should face squarely, and it should be part of this deficit negotiation. I am not for a quick fix that is introduced in the next couple of days or hours; rather, I would like to see a thoughtful repair and reform of Medicare and other entitlement programs so they will continue to be in service in the future.

GREATER EXPORTS TO AFRICA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I have visited Africa many times. When I have, I have left with an amazing impression of this great continent and all that it contains. It really does lure one and draw you back to the different places in Africa that offer such a rich history but also offer great opportunity.

What I find in Africa today is that China has an increasing presence on that continent. China has a plan when it comes to the future of Africa. America does not. That is why I am going to offer as an amendment to the TAG bill which is currently pending before the Senate the American Jobs Through Greater Exports to Africa Act. My partners on the bill are Senators CHRIS COONS, BEN CARDIN, JOHN BOOZMAN, and MARY LANDRIEU, as well as support in the House from Representative CHRIS SMITH.

At the heart of this bill is the creation of jobs in America. Exporting more goods to Africa will help create jobs here. Every $1 billion in exports supports over 5,000 jobs. I believe we can increase exports from the United States to Africa by 200 percent in real dollars over the next 10 years, and we cannot wait any longer.

If there are some who say that Africa is so backward and so far behind, what is it in the United States they can afford to buy if they even wanted to, that is old thinking. Let me give you some new reality. In the past 10 years, 6 of the world's fastest growing economies are in Sub-Saharan Africa, and in the next 5 years Sub-Saharan Africa will boast seven of the top fastest growing economies in the world. The number of Africans with access to the Internet has increased over the last 10 years fourfold to 27 percent. From 1998 to today, the number of mobile phones on the continent have grown from 4 million to 500 million, and 78 percent of Africa's rural population has access to clean water. These are signs of a growing middle class.

China sees it. We have to see it. China is insinuating itself into the economy of major Africa nations. They are offering concessional loans, and they are offering their contractors, their engineers, and their investment in Africa. We are not. We are going to rue the day. Africa is a great opportunity for us, and this bill addresses it.

I sincerely hope my colleagues in the Senate will consider supporting this greater exports to Africa trade bill. This is something we can do to increase jobs in America, increase trade with Africa, and really build those countries that share our values. The difference between the United States, China, and other countries? We come to the marketplace with values, and we have to make certain those values are protected and encouraged. We can only do that if we are honest traders and we are actively engaged in expanding the markets for our goods and services.

Over the years and during my travels, I have heard from African leaders and American businesses the same story—the U.S. has fallen woefully behind other countries in its commercial engagement with Africa. And our government does not have a coordinated strategy to help match the aggressive efforts of other nations trying to invest in Africa. In endorsing this bill, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce has written that, "Congress has an opportunity to reverse this decline."

But why would U.S. businesses and groups representing them, groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Corporate Council on Africa, think this effort is so important? As I have said, in the past 10 years, 6 of the world's fastest growing economies are in Sub-Saharan Africa, and in the next 5 years Sub-Saharan Africa will boast 7 of the top 10 fastest economies.

From 2000 to 2009, the number of Africans with access to the internet has increased four-fold to 27 percent.

From 1998 to today, the number of mobile phones on the continent has grown from 4 million to more than 500 million, and 78 percent of Africa's rural population has access to clean water.

These are signs of a growing middle class and what the World Bank has called "the brink of an economic takeoff" for Africa. U.S. businesses must be a part of that take-off, and our government must provide a cohesive system of support and a coherent national strategy to enable it. That is what this bill does, and it does so at almost no cost. It would develop a comprehensive strategy to coordinate the work of several U.S. government agencies that help U.S. businesses export American products and services to Africa.

The bill creates a Special Africa Export Strategy Coordinator to ensure that these government agencies are working together efficiently, and in a way that businesses of all sizes can navigate easily. It is smart, low cost, and it creates enormous returns on investment in jobs, diplomatic influence, and engagement.

Meanwhile, other countries are positioning themselves to be there for the coming African economic boom—countries like Brazil, India, and you guessed it, China. China has aggressively moved in. In fact, today, China is Africa's largest trading partner. China has pumped billions of dollars into Africa, often in the form of concessional loans—loans below market rates that have favorable payback options. These loans are hard to resist for developing countries, and they're hard for American companies to compete with.

Between 2008 and 2010, China provided more financing to the developing world than the World Bank—loans totaling more than $110 billion. This money buys China access to markets, natural resources, consumers, and political influence. A recent story on CNN.com, entitled ''Chinese Media Make Inroads into Africa,'' shows the kind of aggressive engagement we are up against.

This past January, state-owned Chinese Central Television opened its first broadcast hub outside of Beijing. Where did they put it? Mumbai? London? Rio? Try Nairobi. Another Chinese state-run news organization has more than 20 bureaus on the African continent, part of what is called the China Africa News Service. According to the article, it's all part of an effort ''to win the hearts and minds of people in the continent and create a more fertile business environment.'' And it's at our expense. It should make us take a hard look at what the U.S. Government is doing to promote and support our own businesses. And that is what this bill does.

But this bill is not just good for American interests, it is also good for Africa—something our competitors are not always concerned with. While the Chinese may offer sweetheart deals that buyers can't resist, the price of doing business with China is much higher than just the cost of repaying loans.

To calculate the real price you have to add to the sum the precious natural resources that China gobbles up for its growing economy back home and the environmental devastation that comes from its general lack of concern for environmental standards. You have to add the cost of Africans losing out on work when the Chinese ship in their own labor to build the projects they are bankrolling. And when Africans do get the jobs you have to consider the cost of the poor labor standards and working conditions they have to endure. And lastly you have to consider China's indifference to democracy, corruption, and human rights standards.

A recent New York Times article illustrated an even greater cost—a far more deadly side of Chinese involvement in Africa. It dealt with the resurgence of ivory poaching in Uganda and Kenya and the DRC. It is a resurgence that has resulted in tens of thousands of elephants being slaughtered over the past several years and, get this, it is a resurgence fueled by Chinese demand—as much as 70 percent of the ivory is smuggled to China. In fact, the article goes on to say that there is growing evidence that ivory poaching actually increases in elephant-rich areas where Chinese construction workers are building roads.

Now, I said this was a deadly consequence of Chinese involvement in Africa, but I didn't mean just for elephants. Much of the money from this Chinese-fueled increase in the ivory trade ends up in the hands of international fugitive Joseph Kony and his band of murdering thugs. It is widely believed that Kony's Lord's Resistance Army has embraced ivory poaching to fund its reign of terror.

The U.S. Government should seek a level of engagement with our African partners that makes American companies and American products competitive alternatives to what China has to offer. That's what this bill does. It would establish a minimum number of commercial Foreign Service officers to be stationed at U.S. embassies in Africa and the multi-lateral investment banks. It would increase the Export Import Bank staff presence on the ground in Africa. That means better support for U.S. businesses on the continent and better interface with African governments. The bill would also formalize the training economic and commercial officers receive, so they are fully aware of all the tools available for export promotion and financing—a benefit to businesses who want to do business in Africa, or anywhere in the world. And finally, it would equip the U.S. government to counter the aggressive concessional—or below market—loans that many African nations cannot resist.

The Increasing American Jobs through Greater Exports to Africa Act has something for everyone to support. It is good for the American economy. It helps U.S. businesses create jobs here at home by tapping into a burgeoning overseas market hungry for our products. It is good U.S. foreign policy. It positions America to maintain our global leadership in a shifting geopolitical landscape. And it is good for the people of the African continent. Superior American products and business practices would become more competitive and financially accessible to them.

That is why the Senate Foreign Relations Committee unanimously approved this common sense bill. Now the full Senate has a chance to do the same. I urge all of my colleagues to support this critical effort. We must commit today that the United States will not be left behind in Africa. Every day we wait, countries such as China expand their economic, political, and diplomatic footprint on the continent.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Colorado is recognized.

WIND ENERGY TAX CREDIT

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, I come to the floor again to urge my colleagues to extend the production tax credit for wind energy. I would like to note that on the heels of Senator DURBIN's comments about China, we wish the Chinese energy industry well, but we do not want to outsource our wind energy jobs to China needlessly. We are on a path to do so.

I see my colleague from Iowa here, Senator GRASSLEY, who I know will speak later on the wind production tax credit, but it is going to expire in less than 1 month from now—December 31, to be specific—if we do not act. That means we are 1 month away from pulling the rug out from under an industry that is currently playing a key role in revitalizing American manufacturing, creating jobs, and powering our Nation. We are literally 1 month away from ending a credit that supports tens of thousands of workers right here in the United States.

Each day that we wait to extend the PTC, we risk losing more good-paying American jobs. We also risk doing away with a credit that is a major contributor to the success and development of our Nation's wind industry. This credit has helped companies leverage billions of dollars' worth of investments and created thousands of made-in-America manufacturing jobs.

If history is any guide, allowing this critical tax credit to expire would be disastrous. The expiration of the PTC in 2000, 2002, and 2004 led to massive drops in wind energy installation. Already in my home State of Colorado this year we have seen hundreds of layoffs across the Front Range due to our heel-dragging on the PTC.

Each time I discuss the PTC on the Senate floor, I highlight a different State to show the vitality of the wind industry in that particular State, how this important credit has created jobs for that State's economy. Today I am here to talk about Iowa, America's heartland and the homeland of the PTC.

In Iowa wind power is no longer an alternative source of energy. In fact, Iowa has become the Nation's No. 2 producer of wind energy, providing close to 20 percent of the State's electric power. Its potential is not even close to being fully tapped. Iowa's wind resources could someday produce up to 44 times the State's current electricity needs.

Let me share some specifics with my colleagues. Nearly 3,000 turbines spin statewide in Iowa, and Iowa is home to various manufacturing facilities that produce wind turbines and components. The industry employs nearly 7,000 Iowans, half of whom are located at manufacturing facilities all across the State.

Take, for example, Pocahontas County. We can see the map of Iowa here. There are a total of 216 wind turbines that have been constructed in Pocahontas County. When all turbines are