

### COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, last week, after the Nation celebrated the second inauguration of President Obama, I expressed a hope that this Congress would be characterized by its commitment to finding common ground.

I am pleased that a bipartisan group of eight Senators—four Democrats and four Republicans—will announce an agreement on a framework for comprehensive immigration reform as early as this afternoon.

No one denies America's immigration system is broken. As I have said, this is one of the most important legislative missions Congress will undertake this year. I applaud these eight Senators for setting aside partisanship to tackle a crucial issue facing our Nation.

This is a positive first step, but the true test of our congressional leadership will be to pass a comprehensive bill.

As a Senator from Nevada who has for years witnessed firsthand the difficulties our broken immigration system presents for immigrants and their families, it is very important to me personally that we finally resolve this issue. So I pledge that I will do everything in my power as the majority leader to get a bill across the finish line. Nothing short of bipartisan success is acceptable to me.

President Obama has already taken commendable executive action to suspend deportation of outstanding young men and women who were brought to this country illegally by their parents. I thank President Obama for his leadership and for making comprehensive immigration reform a top priority of his administration.

I am also pleased President Obama will present to the Nation his own ideas to fix the current broken immigration system during a visit to Las Vegas tomorrow. With bipartisan support building in both Houses of Congress, and a President who is eager to solve this issue, there is no reason we should not pass comprehensive immigration reform immediately. It will be good for our economy and good for immigrant families. But successful immigration reform cannot be piecemeal, and it must include a path to citizenship for an estimated 11 million undocumented individuals in our country.

Legislators must craft a comprehensive solution that, among other things, continues to secure our borders; punishes unscrupulous employers who exploit immigrants and undercut American wages; improves our dysfunctional legal immigration system; and requires the 11 million people who are undocumented to register with the government, pay fines and taxes, and go to the back of the line—not to the front of the line. They have to learn English, work, pay taxes, and stay out of trouble. Only then they, as I have indicated, get to go to the back of the line. But they do obtain legal status, which is so important.

The framework proposed by the bipartisan group of eight Senators meets these criteria. I hope we will soon have a bill to send through the committee process and bring to the floor for a vote.

I have long said when my Republican colleagues were truly ready to craft a commonsense legislative solution that was tough, fair, and practical, we would stand ready to cooperate. We have been doing this alone. It is good to have some friends and partners in this effort.

For years Democrats have been eager to pass comprehensive immigration reform, but the Republicans have been unwilling to work to find common ground. I am glad things have changed. I am so happy to see that my Republican colleagues—at least some of them—finally seem ready to find a bipartisan way to correct the flaws in this Nation's immigration system instead of just complaining that the system is broken.

### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

Mr. REID. Would the Chair announce the business of the day.

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 until 4:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

### FEDERAL SPENDING

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, during the next few weeks and months Congress and the President will again have an opportunity to demonstrate that we are serious about dealing with deficits and debt by reducing spending. We have the debt limit issue coming up, we have the sequestration issue coming up by March 2, and we have the continuing resolution issue coming up on March 27. So those are three very real times—and important times—to deal with deficit and spending.

The reason we need to address the Federal runaway spending is obvious to everybody who has a family budget and wonders why Congress cannot live the same as families live—within our income.

The reason we need to address the Federal spending is obvious—because it is the real driver of our deficits and our debt. Spending is the reason we are up against the \$16.4 trillion debt limit. Spending was the reason Congress and President Obama raised the debt ceiling by \$2.1 trillion just a year and a half ago.

In 2006 the junior Senator from Illinois, Mr. Obama, came to the floor and made a very passionate and thoughtful statement here on the Senate floor in opposition to raising the debt limit. Many of the reasons he gave then are relevant today. In fact, they are even more appropriate because the debt is much higher and we have a fiscal mess.

It is instructive for my colleagues to hear the words straight from then-Senator Obama. He delivered these remarks on March 16, 2006. At that time, the Senate was debating raising the debt limit by \$781 billion to a new limit then that seems very small today—about half of what it is today—raising the limit in 2006 to \$8.9 trillion. So I thought it would be worth—for the President's benefit as well as our benefit—going over what then-Senator, now-President Obama had to say, so I am going to quote partially from his speech. This is from the 2006 debt ceiling debate:

The fact that we are here today to debate raising America's debt limit is a sign of leadership failure. It is a sign that the U.S. Government can't pay its own bills. It is a sign that we now depend on ongoing financial assistance from foreign countries to finance our Government's reckless fiscal policies.

He goes on to say:

Over the past 5 years, our federal debt has increased by \$3.5 trillion to \$8.6 trillion. That is "trillion" with a T. That is money that we have borrowed from the Social Security trust fund, borrowed from China and Japan, borrowed from American taxpayers. And over the next 5 years, between now and 2011, the President's budget will increase the debt by almost \$3.5 trillion.

Numbers that large are sometimes hard to understand. Some people may wonder why they matter. Here is why: This year, the Federal Government will spend \$220 billion on interest. That is more money to pay interest on our national debt than we will spend on Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program. That is more money to pay interest on our debt this year than we will spend on education, homeland security, transportation, veterans benefits combined.

It is more money in one year than we are likely to spend to rebuild the devastated gulf coast in a way that honors the best of America. And the cost of our debt is one of the fastest growing expenses in the Federal budget.

Senator Obama went on to say:

This rising debt is a hidden domestic enemy, robbing our cities and States of critical investment in infrastructure like bridges, ports, levees; robbing our families and our children of critical investments in education, health care reform; robbing our seniors of the retirement and health security they have counted on.

Every dollar we pay in interest is a dollar that is not going to investment in America's priorities. Instead, interest payments are a significant tax on all Americans—a debt tax