

Just think of it. We agreed to reduce the growth of spending from \$37 billion now at that rate 2 years ago. We were going to let it grow to 47, we reduced the growth to 45, and we come back to the American people and say we can't effect that now? We can't reduce the growth and spending just that little bit? We promised you that we would raise the debt ceiling, but I know it made you angry, American people. You were mad at us because we mismanaged your money. But we promise, we will reduce the growth of spending by \$2.1 trillion. Trust us. We will do it.

And here we are. President Obama, 6 months later, produced a budget that wiped out all those cuts and increased taxes, taxes and spending. This has been the pattern we have been in. I have to say, we do not need to have this happen.

So I am prepared to meet with the President. I am prepared to meet with the Secretary of Defense, the Office of Management and Budget, and talk about where we can find other reductions in spending and reduce some of the reductions on the Defense Department. We need to reduce a good many of those, frankly. Then the Defense Department can phase in some reductions in spending over the outyears. They can do that. But too much too fast is destabilizing. No business would do that. So we have to figure out a way to make this system work.

I was pleased to work with Senator LEVIN and Senator INHOFE today. I want to be cooperative and be positive in our efforts. I like much of what we did with the authorization bill in the Armed Services Committee, but we just didn't talk about the elephant in the room; that is, the sequester, the real danger we have there. We are going to have to discuss it now. It will be part of the floor discussion and debate if it is not fixed.

It can be fixed. I think we are all prepared to work for it. I don't believe this country will sink into the ocean. I don't believe this country is going to have to close its ports. I don't believe this country is going to have to end tours at the White House to reduce the growth of spending by \$2 trillion, from \$47 trillion to \$45 trillion over the next 10 years. I don't believe that is going to bankrupt us. But we ought to do it in a smart way. We should have every agency and department of government tighten their belts, not just some.

We slipped into this when the sequester was written to try to effect some political result that didn't occur, and now, as a responsible Senate, we have to consider what is right for America. The right thing is to have all agencies and departments tighten their belts and reduce the pressure that is now falling on our Defense Department.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BEGICH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that Senators proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators being permitted to speak for 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

B. TODD JONES NOMINATION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, on Tuesday, the Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing on the nomination of B. Todd Jones to serve as the director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, ATF. I thank Senator KLOBUCHAR for the exceptional job she did in chairing this hearing and setting the record straight with respect to distortions of the nominee's record.

Todd Jones continues to serve this country honorably. He volunteered for the U.S. Marine Corps in 1983, serving on active duty as a judge advocate and infantry officer until 1989. In 1991, he was recalled to Active Duty to command the 4th Marine Division's Military Police Company in Iraq. He also served as commanding officer of the Twin Cities Marine Reserve Unit. He has twice been considered for the important law enforcement position of U.S. attorney and twice unanimously reported out of the Judiciary Committee and unanimously confirmed by the Senate. In 1998 he was first appointed to be the U.S. attorney for the District of Minnesota and became the first African American U.S. attorney in Minnesota's history. In 2009, when that office was at a low point and needed a strong hand to lead it back, he answered the call, again.

When the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives needed new leadership after its poorly conceived and executed Fast and Furious operation, the President called upon him, again. He was called upon to clear up the mess and deserves our thanks for having made great progress in doing so. He has done so while all the while continuing to serve as the U.S. attorney for the District of Minnesota and has had to restore leadership and effectiveness in two important law enforcement agencies.

We have received numerous letters of support for Todd Jones' nomination from law enforcement, respected legal professionals, and veterans of the U.S. Marine Corps. He has critics; he has taken on difficult assignments. As he noted at his hearing, sometimes you have to take action to make a change and change is not always something that everyone is going to favor. A fair evaluation of what he has accomplished leads me to support his nomination to be confirmed as the director of ATF.

The ATF has been without a permanent director since that position was made a confirmable position in 2006. We lean heavily on the expertise of the ATF. For example, under the leadership of Todd Jones, since September 2011, ATF has been called on to analyze the bombs left near the finish line at the Boston Marathon, to sift through burned debris at the chemical plant explosion in West, TX, and to trace the weapons used in the Newtown and Aurora mass killings. Agents of the ATF have played a major role in investigating some of our Nation's worst tragedies. The agency needs a confirmed head. Todd Jones is the ATF's fifth acting director since 2006. The Senate should be doing everything it can to ensure that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives has the tools it needs to keep Americans safe, and that starts with a Senate-confirmed director.

I had accommodated the ranking member on requests for further information and delay on this nomination for months. Senator GRASSLEY insisted on the production of documents from the Department of Justice that his staff had already had access to for months. He insisted that his staff be able to interview Todd Jones in his capacity as U.S. Attorney for the District of Minnesota, as well as two other Justice Department officials, in order to try to build a case against another nomination, that of Tom Perez to be Labor Secretary. Those interviews have taken place. Senator GRASSLEY requested additional background information from the administration not usually required by the committee for an executive nomination and he received that information. When he sought information about an ATF operation in Milwaukee, I arranged a bipartisan briefing for our staffs from the agency.

Some are criticizing the nominee based on a complaint filed against him by an AUSA from the earlier Bush-era U.S. attorney office. After learning about the complaint, I had initially put on hold a planned hearing on this nomination. In late April, a news article reported that "an aide to Senator GRASSLEY" had released a letter from OSC that the ranking member and I had received about the existence of that preliminary inquiry. It was at that time that I determined that this hearing should move forward to allow the nominee an opportunity to defend his reputation. When a private complaint against him was disclosed publicly, I thought it unfair that the nominee could not respond. He did at his hearing and in my view that matter is put to rest.

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel, OSC, closed the file on the underlying allegation made against the nominee of "gross mismanagement and abuses of authority." The allegation involving alleged retaliation has been referred to mediation. In deference to the complaining party and the request of the