FISCAL PRIORITIES

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I listened very carefully to my Republican colleagues who have come to the floor blaming the Democrats and the President for everything you can imagine, including the high price of gasoline and deficits as far as the eye can see.

I wish to say to Senator MANCHIN, I am going to make some very brief remarks about H.R. 1 and then yield to you for 5 minutes.

I respect the right of any colleague to say whatever he or she wants on the floor. But I also wish to tell the American people who may be following this debate, that in truth, in the last many years, 40 years, the only party to balance the budget was the Democrats. Bill Clinton, in his Presidency, not only took a deficit brought about by Republican Presidents, not only did he balance the budget with us, but we created surpluses. Guess what. Twenty-three million jobs.

Compare that to George W. Bush. He created huge deficits, handed President Obama a tremendous debt and deficits—I will get the exact numbers—and created 1 million jobs, compared to 23 million jobs.

I appreciate the lectures from my Republican friends, but look at any measure: job creation, budget balancing, stock market. Check it out, America. These are facts that are in the history books. So please do not lecture us about how to balance the budget. We know how to do it. The way you do it is cut waste, cut fraud, cut abuse, make sure everything you spend is essentially justifiable by the results, by the benefits, and invest in our people so if they lose a job, we invest in worker training, invest in our people, invest in science and technology, invest in health research, invest in our children.

If you follow that method, we will not only balance the budget, we will create jobs. We know their approach, H.R. 1, which they support, would devastate this economy, barely doing anything about the deficit. Most amazingly, they do not think billionaires should pay even a little bit higher tax rate than people who are earning $150,000—billionaires, multimillionaires. It does not make any sense.

So with that as an opening, I am very pleased to yield to the Senator from West Virginia, Mr. MANCHIN, for 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I rise today to express my deep concerns with the two widely divergent proposals for a continuing resolution that will be presented to us here today.

Now, I may be just a freshman Senator, but I will be blunt—this whole process does not make a lot of sense to me, and, I am afraid it doesn't make sense to a lot of West Virginians or most Americans.

We will likely have votes on two proposals today, and both options are partisan and unrealistic. And neither one will pass.

The first is a Democratic proposal that does not go far enough. This proposal, which calls for $6.5 billion in new cuts, utterly ignores our fiscal reality. Our Nation is badly in debt and spending at absolutely unsustainable and out-of-control levels. In February alone, the Federal Government outspent revenues by an unacceptable $223 billion. We must turn our financial ship around, but the Senate proposal continues to sail forward as if there is no storm on the horizon.

On the other hand, we could choose a second even more flawed measure: a House GOP proposal that blindly hacks the budget with no sense of our priorities or of our values as a country. I did not grow up in an America that would carelessly cut Hear Start and make the playing field even harder for kids born into poverty. Our America should not cut funding for veterans or for border security or for first responders or especially for our children without at least discussing the alternatives.

The bottom line, however, is this: Democrats and Republicans are being asked to vote on wildly different proposals for reining in spending. Republicans will say Democrats do not go far enough. Democrats will say Republicans go too far. The truth is both are right, and both proposals will fail. Worse still, everyone in Congress knows they will fail.

The more important question is this, Why are we engaging in this political theater?

Why are we voting on partisan proposals that we know will fail, that we all know do not balance our Nation's priorities with the need to get our fiscal house in order?

Why are we doing all this when the most powerful person in these negotiations, our President, has failed to lead this debate or offer a serious proposal for spending and cuts that he would be willing to fight for?

How does that make sense?

The truth is that this debate, as important as it is, will not be decided by House Republicans and Senate Democrats negotiating with each other or past each other. This debate will be decided when the President leads these tough negotiations.

And right now that is not happening.

I know it is not easy. I know that it takes compromise. I know it will be partisan and difficult. I know that everyone will have to give up something and no one will want to relinquish anything. But that is what the American people are demanding.

Respectfully, I am asking President Obama to take this challenge head on, bring people together and propose a compromise plan for dealing with our Nation's fiscal challenges, both now and for the future.

For me, when I was Governor of the great State of West Virginia, dealing with our State's problems required bringing together a diverse and strong-willed group of legislators. But I did, because that was my responsibility. By working together, we were able to tackle the tough fiscal problems that our State faced and we did it while setting our priorities and protecting the most vulnerable in our State.

The bottom line is the President is the leader of this great Nation, and when it comes to an issue of significant national importance, the President must lead—not the majority leader or Speaker but the President.

He must sit down with leaders of both parties and help hammer out a real bipartisan compromise that moves our Nation forward and establishes the priorities that represent our values and all hard-working families.

And I truly believe that he can do it. And when we finally do come together and agree to a bipartisan solution, we will not only set a new tone for our Nation but we can start to focus on what the American people sent all of us here to do: start working together to create a more prosperous future for our children and our families, and be the America we all know we can be.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I am going to use leader time. I am wondering how long Senator BOXER is going to take.

Mrs. BOXER. We have a number of people coming for 30 minutes.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I will use leader time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

Mr. REID. Madam President, since the moment Republican Representatives passed their budget, the now infamous H.R. 1—it was their No. 1 issue in the House of Representatives—the country has been waiting to see whether the Senate would repeat the House's mistake in passing it. The House has passed it.

The plan the tea party pushed through the House is an irresponsible plan. It is a reckless plan. It is dangerous for the health of our economy and certainly the citizens of our great country.

In the last few days, I have come to the floor and explained at length the damage this tea party plan would do in the short term and in the long term. Let me now again talk, briefly, about a few of the things I have talked about before—but I will talk about them again. Here are some of the consequences.

H.R. 1 will fire 700,000 Americans, 6,000 Nevadans. Our budget would create jobs, not cost jobs. It will kick 200,000 Head Start students, the poorest of the poor, little boys and girls trying to get started in life, it will kick them off their ability to learn to read and do elementary math. Hundreds in Nevada will suffer from that. This is a very successful early education program. Head Start works.

It would slash college students' Pell grants, the financial aid so many rely on to afford to go to school. It will eliminate job training investment at a time when we need them the most. It would pull the plug on 600 renewable energy jobs at the largest solar plant in Nevada. It would fire 600 Nevadans who work at community health centers, which hurts those workers as well as the neediest Nevadans who need this help every day.

It would arbitrarily slash programs that fight crime and keep our neighborhoods safe. It would slash homeland security investments that keep Nevadans safe and our country safe. We have 55, 60 million people who visit Las Vegas every year. It is important we keep them safe also.

The mean-spirited bill, H.R. 1, eliminates national public broadcasting. That is saying a lot; is it not? It eliminates the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts. These programs create jobs. The National Endowment for the Humanities is the reason we have, in northern Nevada every January, the Cowboy Poetry Festival. Had that program not been around, the tens of thousands of people who come there every year would not exist.

National Institutes of Health, it whacks that. When we are at a time in the history of this country, when we are on the verge of breakthroughs on some of the most devastating diseases known to man, they are cutting that program.

There are scores of other examples I could talk about. But, in short, the Republican plan they want to push through the Senate is all smoke and mirrors. It cuts the deficit in the name of a stronger future but cuts the most important ways we strengthen our future. It is counterproductive. It is bad policy. It is going to cost America 700,000 jobs. This is not some figure I picked out of the air. Economists agree with them, including Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's, who, by the way, worked for the Republican nominee for President, JOHN MCCAIN. He was his chief economic adviser.

Their plan slashes billions from the budget and hopes no one will look past the pricetag. H.R. 1 is not just about numbers, it is about people. It is about programs. It is about little boys and girls at Head Start. It is about senior citizens whose programs are going to be cut.

Because Republicans know that once the country sees what is in the fine print, they will run away from that as fast as they can. It seems Republicans themselves have finally read their own budget in the Senate because now they are even running from H.R. 1.

In the Senate, it was not we who moved H.R. 1 forward, it was the Republicans. We have a procedure in the Senate called rule XIV. It allows bills to move forward.

The Republicans decided they wanted to get to H.R. 1. So they jump-started H.R. 1. They wanted to make sure they let their buddies in the House know they wanted to have a vote on H.R. 1.

Last Thursday at 4, back in the Vice President's office, there was a meeting held with me, Senator MCCONNELL, Speaker BOEHNER, Leader PELOSI, and the Vice President. The purpose was to move forward on budget negotiations. We had a very good meeting. Everyone was kind and thoughtful and considerate. The idea we came up with is that what we should do to move these negotiations forward is have a vote on H.R. 1 and a vote on our alternative. That was the agreement. It was agreed upon by the Vice President, JOE BIDEN; by the Republican leader, MITCH MCCONNELL; by the majority leader, HARRY REID; by the Speaker, JOHN BOEHNER; and the leader of the Democrats in the House, NANCY PELOSI. That was the agreement we made: We would come here today and have a vote on H.R. 1 and on our alternative.

After we had made the agreement, the staff was called into the meeting. We told them what was done. Now over here the Republicans don't want to vote. They don't want to live up to the agreement.

Last Thursday the leaders of both Houses of Congress and both parties met with the White House. We decided this was a way to move forward. We agreed to hold a vote on H.R. 1 that Republicans moved to the Senate floor themselves. Then we would vote on the Democratic alternative, which makes much smarter cuts and more solid investments. But that would be up to the body to decide. Then we would return to the negotiating table and try again to find common ground.

There is no question that was the agreement made, no question. That was the deal. Now Republicans are reneging on that deal. They don't want to vote on their own bill. They want some procedural votes. They will have an opportunity to vote on H.R. 1. I may have to jump through all the procedural hoops to do it, in spite of the fact that they made a deal that we would move to have those votes. We are going to do that. The Republicans over here are going to have to vote on that terrible bill, H.R. 1. They will have to vote on it. They don't want to vote on their own bill.

The budget we outline—and our votes on that budget—reflects our values, values such as helping our Nation recover and prosper, giving us strong education for the children, encouraging innovation, keeping America competitive. But another important value is keeping one's word. Where I come from people keep their word. I am disappointed that Republicans now refuse to keep theirs.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, could the Chair tell me what the order is?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democrats control 51 minutes 26 seconds.

Mrs. BOXER. How much time do I control?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator may speak for up to 10 minutes total. She has spoken for 4 minutes.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, my intention is to yield to Senator UDALL. He and Senator MERKLEY will engage in a colloquy.

I wish to open before yielding by saying that Senator REID has laid out the devastating consequences of H.R. 1, which the Republicans have put forward as their plan to cut the budget. It is a jobs killer. It is a killer for the middle class. They said they would have a vote on it. Now they don't want to vote on it. We are going to have a vote on it. It is important for the American people to understand the various plans to cut the deficit.

One of the things in H.R. 1, of many, is a huge cut to the Environmental Protection Agency. There are two points I wish to make in that regard. In 1970, the Clean Air Act was passed. The vote in the Senate was 73 to 0. The vote in the House was 374 to 1. Richard Nixon signed the Clean Air Act. H.R. 1 destroys the Clean Air Act by giving the largest cut of any agency to the Environmental Protection Agency. If that is not enough, it prohibits the EPA from enforcing pollution laws. In 1977 there were the Clean Air Act amendments signed by Jimmy Carter. There wasn't even a rollcall vote it was so popular. In 1990, George Herbert Walker Bush signed the Clean Air Act amendments. Two out of the three Presidents were Republicans. This passed 89 to 10 in the Senate and 401 to 25 in the House.

The Clean Air Act and the EPA are strongly supported by the American people. The only place we have a lack of support is in the Congress by our Republican friends, primarily.

The American Lung Association says 69 percent think the EPA should update the Clean Air Act with stricter air pollution limits; 68 percent believe Congress should not stop the EPA from enforcing Clean Air Act standards, which is what H.R. 1 does; and 69 percent believe EPA scientists, not Congress, should set pollution standards.

Our friends on the other side, through H.R. 1, are acting as if they have all the brilliance in the world, all the scientific credentials in the world. They don't.

I ask unanimous consent that we continue with our time until Senator KERRY comes to the Chamber to talk on his particular subject.

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

Mrs. BOXER. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Madam President, America's environmental laws are public health laws. Undermining those public health laws may protect special interests, but last year the Clean Air Act protected American families from 1.7 million asthma attacks, 130,000 heart attacks and 86,000 emergency room visits.

In New Mexico, over 170,000 residents suffer from asthma, and over 47,000 of those are children. Thousands also suffer from other respiratory illnesses. The House bill puts hundreds of thousands of New Mexicans at greater risk from pollution from powerplants, oil refineries, mines, and cement kilns.

The Clean Air Act has cut six major pollutants by over 40 percent, but air pollution still claims 70,000 lives per year, three times that of car accidents.

If we weaken that act, unfortunately, that number will rise. That is why the American Lung Association opposes these environmental rollbacks in the House bill.

The Clean Air Act also protects pregnant mothers and developing children from mercury, a neurotoxin that creates problems in brain development, including attention and memory problems. Mercury comes out of smoke stacks into the air, deposits into our water, and is also consumed in the fish that we eat.

One New Mexico pediatrician, Dr. K.P. Stoller, notes that ''mercury is the most toxic non-radioactive element on the periodic table.'' In New Mexico, over 2,000 pounds of mercury are emitted each year. Clean Air Act standards are making progress reducing that amount.

The American Academy of Pediatrics opposes the House bill because it would allow for more highly toxic mercury than existing law in the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat. Overall, the House continuing resolution undermines the Clean Air Act, leading to more pollution, asthma, hospital visits, and less healthy children.

These efforts run counter to the progress we are trying to make in New Mexico. At the University of New Mexico, the New Mexico Environmental Public Health Tracking Network and the National Tracking Network at the Center for Disease Control work closely with the Environmental Protection Agency to provide air quality data. We use that data to better understand how to prevent disease and develop air pollution standards for our State.

Unfortunately, these State air pollution control efforts are targeted for cuts in the House bill. The funding is not a lot of money so some people believe the real reason is to stop public health protections from going forward.

These standards are designed to reduce pollution, not put industrial facilities out of business. We have heard from few, if any, businesses in New Mexico that want these antipublic health provisions in the House bill.

Instead we are seeing dozens of e-mails from people simply asking that the Environmental Protection Agency do its job to protect public health.

Here are some additional facts about the House bill.

It cuts $2 billion in local wastewater and drinking water treatment funds, costing over 50,000 jobs. Dozens of rural communities from New Mexico are in desperate need of funds to rebuild aging water treatment plants and remove septic tanks that are polluting our limited supplies of groundwater.

It blocks the Environmental Protection Agency from enforcing the Clean Water Act to protect wetlands. Wetlands definitions are a controversial issue, but the Supreme Court has ruled on this twice, and Federal agencies need to move forward to resolve uncertainty and issue permits in a responsible way.

It cuts $60 million from the 2010 enacted level and more than $140 million from the President's 2012 Budget for grants to State and local environmental and public health agencies. Nearly every State is in a budget crisis.

America's leading public health professionals have responded to efforts to block clean air safeguards. For example: 1,882 Doctors, Nurses and Health Professionals:

> Please fulfill the promise of clean, healthy air for all Americans to breathe. Support full implementation of the Clean Air Act and resist any efforts to weaken, delay or block progress toward a healthier future for all Americans.

From the American Lung Association:

> The House of Representatives also adopted amendments that would block implementation of the Clean Air Act and its lifesaving protections . . . These provisions and others adopted by the House of Representatives in H.R. 1 would result in millions of Americans—including children, seniors, and people with chronic disease such as asthma—being forced to breathe air that is unhealthy. Breathing air pollution can cause asthma attacks, heart attacks, strokes, cancer and shorten lives.

From the American Public Health Association:

> Attempts to remove protections already in place must be stopped. The public health community is very concerned about the long-term health consequences of global climate change. Blocking EPA's authority to reduce carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases could mean the difference between chronic debilitating illness or a healthy life.

From the Trust for America's Health:

> The potential consequences for public health are grave because the Clean Air Act protects the most vulnerable populations—those with asthma and other lung disease, children, older adults, and people with heart disease and diabetes—from the dangers of pollution . . . The science says carbon pollution is bad for our health. Rolling back EPA's ability to protect the public from this threat literally has life and death stakes.

From the American Thoracic Society:

> The Clean Air Act is one of the best public health success stories of the past four decades and has saved thousands of American lives. Any effort to revise the Clean Air Act should be carefully considered and focused on enhancing the public health benefits—not on granting big polluters a free pass to increase the amount of carbon pollution they release into the environment.

The American Lung Association has said the health of 137.2 million Americans—including as many as 29.8 million children under the age of 14 and close to 2 million children suffering from asthma attacks—are potentially exposed to unhealthful levels of smog, air pollution.

Scientific evidence increasingly shows that air pollution plays a major role as a trigger for asthma episodes. Specifically, fine particles, sulfur dioxide and ozone have been linked to increases in patients' use of asthma medication, emergency department visits and hospital admissions.

Powerplant particle pollution is estimated to cause more than 603,000 asthma episodes per year, 366,000 of which could be avoided by cleaning up the power plants.

Estimates of the annual human health costs of outdoor air pollution range from $14 billion to $55 billion annually.

Each year, pollution claims 70,000 lives in the United States.

In 2010, the United States will save a projected $1,100 billion in health benefits—i.e., avoided illness and death—associated with reductions in air pollution due to implementation of the Federal Clean Air Act.

Let me thank the chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, Senator BOXER. She has done an excellent job in terms of outlining in committee the real issues facing us. The big issue is, as we have heard today from Leader REID and Chairman BOXER, H.R. 1, or what we call the House Republican budget, is not only a budget bill, it is loaded with all these environmental riders that attack public health by repealing public health laws.

I wish to reflect, as Chairman BOXER did, on the history. We used to have tremendous bipartisan support in terms of public health and environmental laws. I remember the glory days of the Senate in the 1960s and 1970s. It was the Senate that passed the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, created the Environmental Protection Agency, passed the Endangered Species Act. All of those were passed and created with significant bipartisan support. In fact, anywhere from 8 to 12 Republicans believed these were strong laws that needed to be passed. We don't need to look further than the majorities.

In 1967, the Air Quality Act passed 88 to 0. In 1970, the Clean Air Act passed 73 to 0, championed by a number of Republican Senators. In 1990, the Clean Air Act, championed by President George H.W. Bush and his EPA Administrator, William Reilly, passed 89 to 10. So there was broad bipartisan support.

What has happened to the Senate and to the Congress in terms of protecting public health? I suggest what we have seen with this House Republican budget is very strong powerful special interests weighing in, and those folks on that side kind of catering to that kind of mentality rather than looking out for public health and the American people.

I rise to talk about the impact of this bill on Americans and on public health and on New Mexicans.

At this point, I wish to engage in a colloquy with Senator MERKLEY on some of the damaging aspects he sees in terms of public health and the environment in H.R. 1, the House Republican budget.

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, it is a pleasure to join my colleague from New Mexico to discuss both the general environment, the environment in which we no longer have strong bipartisan support for clean air and clean water that we once had, and some of the specifics of the House Republican budget and the damage that would do to American citizens.

Just to give a small sense of this, in 2010 the Clean Air Act prevented 1.7 million asthma attacks, 130,000 heart attacks, and 86,000 emergency room visits. That is why leading public health experts oppose these cuts, groups such as the American Lung Association, which said: ''H.R. 1 is toxic to public health.''

Why is that the case? I will give a couple examples and then turn back to my colleague. One example is that it would prohibit standards for toxic air pollution, including mercury, lead, arsenic, dioxin, and acid gases coming from coal-burning powerplants. A second is that it would prohibit standards for toxic air pollution coming from industries burning coal and oil. A third is that it would prohibit guidance on how to protect clean drinking water from mountain top mining. A fourth is it would prohibit standards for handling hazardous waste from burning coal just 2 years after a disaster in Tennessee caused 1 billion gallons of coal waste to spill into people's neighborhoods and homes.

I have a longer list, but I will stop there and note that these impacts on water and air occur to citizens in every State under H.R. 1, the Republican budget.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Madam President, if the American people knew what was happening here I think they would be out in the streets in Washington, as we are seeing in Wisconsin where people are turning out and are energized, because the rollback of these environmental laws is a rollback on public health.

As Senator MERKLEY has discussed persuasively, we are talking about preventing heart attacks, preventing emergency room visits. In New Mexico alone over 170,000 residents suffer from asthma. Over 47,000 of those are children. Thousands suffer from respiratory illnesses. With the rollbacks in the House Republican budget, those folks will suffer a lot more. It is going to impact vulnerable populations.

The House Republican budget puts hundreds of thousands of New Mexicans at greater risk from pollution, from powerplants, oil refineries, mines, and cement kilns. The Clean Air Act has had a very positive impact over the years that it has been a law. It has cut six major pollutants by over 40 percent. But air pollution still claims 70,000 lives per year, three times that of car accidents. So if we weaken that act by these riders and this approach in the House Republican budget, that number is going to rise. The number of lives claimed each year is going to rise. That is why one of the major organizations that monitors this, the American Lung Association, opposes these environmental rollbacks in the House bill.

The Clean Air Act also protects pregnant mothers and developing children from mercury, a neurotoxin that creates problems in brain development, including attention and memory problems. Mercury comes out of the smokestacks into the air, deposits into our water, and is also consumed in the fish we eat.

Just to give a little example, in New Mexico—and Senator MERKLEY may have this up in Oregon too—we have these coal-fired powerplants that are emitting mercury. It gets into the streams. We now have a warning on every stream in New Mexico—every stream in New Mexico—that if you are going to catch fish and eat them, do not do it more than about once a week. They actually warn pregnant women to not eat the fish from New Mexico's streams at all. I do not think people realize how much pollution there is out there.

With that, I yield back to Senator MERKLEY for any additional comments the Senator has. I see our good friend, Senator CARDIN, is on the floor and also has been a real leader on this issue. I know he wants to speak also.

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I will say that one key aspect is that the House Republican budget would cut $2 billion from EPA's clean water and safe drinking water infrastructure loan programs. As I am going around my State, holding a townhall in every single county, I hold a meeting with the city and county leaders in advance of the public meeting. At virtually every one of these gatherings, I hear stories from mayors and chairs of county councils who talk about the challenge they have with their aging infrastructure, both on their water supply and on their wastewater disposal; and that aging infrastructure needs to be upgraded as plants wear out and as we discover more challenges we need to address. So cutting the loan program that supports our communities—our rural communities, our suburban communities, our urban communities, all of our communities—in providing clean water to the residents and of helping dispose of and treat wastewater would be an enormous mistake. That partnership is absolutely crucial to communities that cannot otherwise afford this infrastructure. That would mean more sewage and other pollution going into our water ways and less treatment of water we take out to drink.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Madam President, in conclusion, from my perspective, I think it is most important at this point in our history in America that we take actions on the Senate floor that are going to create jobs, that are going to try to move us forward in terms of our economic development.

This House Republican budget is devastating in terms of creating jobs. Leader REID, I think, said 700,000 Americans are fired as a result of this job-killing bill, this House Republican budget. It is a devastating—devastating—thing to the fragile economic recovery we have going on right now.

I am very happy to hear—very happy to hear—that Senator REID says we are going to bring the House Republican budget here to the Senate floor. We are going to have an up-or-down vote on that budget. And it will be out there. We are going to have lively debate until we have that vote, and it will be out there for the American people to see the devastating consequences it could have if we adopted it.

With that, I say to Senator MERKLEY, I know you have some concluding remarks.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I say to the Senators, if I could take back my time. I want to thank both Senators. We have only 10 minutes remaining, and we have three more speakers. So I thank you very much.

Before I yield to Senator CARDIN—I thought it could be for 5; now I am told there are two more speakers; it will be about 3 minutes—let me put two charts up here in the Chamber and then yield to him for 3 minutes.

Look at this picture, I say to my colleague from Maryland. These are the most difficult times on these children when the air is dirty. This is a beautiful child. She cannot breathe, and she has asthma. The reason we passed the Clean Air Act is because of kids like her, and others who are gasping for air, literally.

The other thing I want to show you is this chart. This is an incredible chart that shows the significant drop in smog-related health advisories in southern California, the most polluted area, since we have put the Clean Air Act into place in the 1970s. Look at this. We have gone from 166 days where there were warnings for people to stay indoors to zero days in 2010. The Republicans, in H.R. 1, devastate the EPA's budget, plus they tell them they cannot enforce the Clean Air Act.

Let me say this: If my Republican friends want to repeal the Clean Air Act, just bring it on, and we will have a debate here. Do not do it through the guise of deficit reduction.

Now I see I have three colleagues in the Chamber for the remaining time. I ask unanimous consent that we have until 20 after before we turn it over to Senator KERRY, and that I am going to yield 3 minutes to the following: Senators CARDIN, LAUTENBERG, and WHITEHOUSE.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, let me thank, first, Senator BOXER for her leadership on this issue in bringing us together to point out what harm the House-passed budget bill would do to our environment.

I start off by saying, when you look at the Republican budget plan in the House, it not only devastates important investments in our environment, it does not bring us to a balanced budget because all the savings they get in these Draconian cuts to our discretionary domestic spending are offset by extending the tax cuts. We lose all the savings through their tax policy.

But today I want to talk about a nonmoney issue, at least a rider that was put on the House budget. Let me read what it says. The bill says that ''none of the funds made available in this Act may be used to . . . implement'' the Bay restoration plan now under way. I am talking about the Chesapeake Bay program, a matter I have talked about on this floor many times.

What does that mean? That means none of the funds in the budget can be used in the six States that are in the watershed, including Maryland and the District of Columbia, to implement their plan. Each of these States is relying and getting Federal funds under the State revolving fund to deal with wastewater treatment plants. Those funds would be denied. None of the money could be used for the State water programs. None of the funds could be used for watershed groups to restore local streams.

We have school groups and civic associations participating with us to clean up the Bay. Those programs would come to an end. It is estimated this one rider alone will cost the Bay restoration effort in Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia more than $300 million.

What does that mean? It means job loss in our areas, by far. We are talking about jobs here. It also puts our citizens at risk as far as their health is concerned. More and more health-related illnesses are coming as a result of the poor quality of water in our communities.

Let me mention one other issue; that is, the House-passed budget—the Republican budget—will slash the EPA budget by 33 percent below the fiscal year 2010 level. That is a one-third reduction in the EPA's budget.

It threatens Clean Water Act protections for lakes, streams, and rivers across our country by cutting $2 billion from the EPA's Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund.

I mention that because in my State and around the Nation we are seeing more and more disasters occurring as a result of water main breaks. We saw what happened in Prince George's County, MD. That was within the last year. We saw what happened in downtown Baltimore when a water main broke and turned our downtown into unpavable streets. We saw what happened in Montgomery County, MD, where River Road became a river and people had to be rescued from their cars. This, once again, is about jobs. It creates jobs. But it also provides us with safe drinking water in our communities.

For all these reasons, Madam President, it is important that we do not allow the House-passed budget to become law.

I thank my colleagues for participating in this debate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

The Senator from New Jersey.

The remarks of Mr. LAUTENBERG are printed in todays RECORD under ''Morning Business.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island is recognized for 3 minutes.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I thank Chairman BOXER for pulling us together. I want to make three quick points in the time I have.

The House bill cuts $2 billion out of the clean water and safe drinking water infrastructure loan programs at a time when EPA calculates we have a $600 billion water infrastructure deficit. We are behind on rebuilding America's clean water infrastructure, and yet they cut it. We need the infrastructure. We could certainly use the jobs. This is a very misplaced cut.

From a clean air perspective, the bill cuts $60 million from State and local grants that ensure clean air and clean water and attacks clean air programs. In 2010, the Clean Air Act is estimated to have saved 160,000 lives, compared to where things would have been without it.

Physicians for Social Responsibility says that U.S. coal plants alone cause about 554,000 asthma attacks each year. Why do I talk about asthma? Rhode Island has a 10-percent rate of asthma, despite not having a single coal-fired powerplant.

Why is this? Because out in the Midwest, they are pumping their pollution up into the sky, where it falls down on our New England States.

Average smokestack height increased from 200 feet tall in 1956 to over 500 feet tall in 1978. In 1970, there were only two U.S. smokestacks over 500 feet tall. By 1985, there were 180 smokestacks taller than 500 feet, and 23 were over 1,000 feet tall—so tall that they had to be put on air traffic control maps.

Why? Because it exports their pollution to us. A State such as Rhode Island has no shot at controlling the pollution that is dumped on us that originates in other States if there is not a strong national EPA to do this. So it is very vital to us. And asthma is a real threat.

Lastly, on carbon pollution, we hear a lot of talk about this, and there are certain things that are just factual at this point. It is a fact that over the last 800,000 years, the atmosphere has been in a range between 170 and 300 parts per million of CO_2. That is a measurement, not a theory. In 1863—a long time ago, during the time of the Civil War in this country—an Irish scientist, John Tyndall, determined that carbon dioxide has a blanketing effect in the atmosphere and increasingly warms the Earth. That has been textbook science for more than a century. It is not a negotiable or debatable proposition. We have burned 7 million to 8 million gigatons of carbon dioxide every year, and it is having an effect. We are now at 391 parts per million—well outside of a benchmark that has lasted for 800,000 years.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has used 3 minutes.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

Mr. KERRY. Madam President, I understand I have 30 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 27½ minutes, I am told.

Mr. KERRY. I ask unanimous consent to use the full 30 minutes.

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

Mr. KERRY. Madam President, I thank my colleagues, the Senator from California and other colleagues, who have been involved in an important discussion here. I will say a few more words about that in the course of my comments.

Let me begin by observing that last week, like a lot of colleagues here, I voted in favor of a 2-week continuing resolution in order to avoid a government shutdown. But I will say that I did so extremely reluctantly, and I am not inclined to continue to do that in a series of hatchet budgets that continue to make cuts without regard to the larger budget considerations we need to be considering. I know colleagues on both sides of the aisle voted reluctantly. Frankly, it is insulting and frustrating that we are reduced to passing incremental allowances just to keep the government functioning. This is just the work of this year's budget—something that should have been passed for an entire year last year.

The impact of this kind of staggered, stop-and-start, keep-them-guessing budgeting on programs and projects that, frankly, need to do some long-term planning actually costs Americans money and costs Americans long-term competitive capacity. Run a business the way we are running these kinds of programs, and you would go under if you had a month-to-month, week-to-week, 2-weeks-to-2-weeks budget process. No department head can plan for the long term because they don't know what they are going to have, how much they are going to spend. Projects that need to begin don't begin, and that costs America leadership. It costs us money. No wonder Americans are frustrated. All we do

is bounce from one short-term, stopgap solution, band aid approach to another, always deferring the tough decisions and the adult conversation, which is exactly what the American people sent us here to engage in.

I come here today to appeal to the common sense and conscience of our colleagues. This is not the time to create a fundamentally political budget document, steeped in ideology. It is not the time to put forward a set of choices, many of which have absolutely nothing to do with reducing the deficit or debt but everything to do with ideological goals long sought by some, now cloaked in the guise of deficit crisis in order to achieve what they have never been able to achieve to date.

Everyone here knows—you have private conversations with colleagues, and they will nod their heads and acknowledge to you how serious this budget situation is. We need a serious conversation about our fiscal situation. It begins with a comprehensive discussion about discretionary spending. Yes, that has to be on the table. But what about entitlements? What about revenues? Everybody here knows we have to work toward a long-term solution in order to reduce the budget deficit and the staggering debt of our country. We are going to have to reduce some Federal spending and make appropriate changes in entitlement programs in order to do that. When we are honest about it, it means you have to talk about everything—revenue, tax reform, spending, and entitlements.

A lot of Americans appropriately ask: What are we doing with 57,000 or 60,000 pages of a tax code? How many Americans have their own page? You can run through it and find an awful lot of big interests, big business, folks who can afford big lobbyists—they get their own pages. But the average American appropriately feels left out and abused by that process. That ought to be on this agenda—the simplification of the code and the fairness of the code.

In addition, we obviously need to talk about Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security. Social Security, frankly, is easy to fix. We fixed it in the 1980s with Ronald Reagan. I was here then. We can do this again. That is not challenging. We can make that safe and whole throughout the century so that our children and grandchildren and their children have the opportunity to trust in the Social Security system. That is doable with minor tweaks.

What is far more complicated and challenging is Medicaid and Medicare. I assure colleagues who are out to undo the health care bill passed by President Obama, if that is undone, those Medicare costs are going to soar and the medical choices before our country are going to become even more complicated.

Back in December, a number of our colleagues understood and embraced exactly what I am saying right now. Senators, Republicans and Democrats alike, including Senators DURBIN, CONRAD, COBURN, and CRAPO, had the courage and willpower to put on the table the whole set of choices when they embraced the debt commission's report, which was appropriately entitled ''The Moment of Truth.'' Nobody liked every proposal set forth by the commission—not even the Commissioners themselves—but they did it in order to put everything on the table for a discussion by us.

The Congress is responsible for making these choices. Unfortunately, the budget sent to us by the House is an unbelievably irresponsible exercise in avoidance, and includes a set of choices that will take America backward. I am not exaggerating about that. I will go into that in a moment.

Let me cite what the commission said to remind us about our responsibility. They said that throughout our Nation's history, Americans have found the courage to do right by our children's future. Deep down, every American knows we face a moment of truth once again. We cannot play games or put off hard choices any longer. Without regard to party, they said, we have a patriotic duty to keep the promise of America to give our children and grandchildren a better life. Our challenge is clear and inescapable. America cannot be great if we go broke. Our businesses will not be able to grow and create jobs, and our workers will not be able to compete successfully for the jobs of the future without a plan to get this crushing debt burden off our backs. I think every Senator probably agrees with that, but is every Senator prepared to do something about it? Certainly, this budget sent to us by the House is an avoidance of that kind of discussion and the responsibility the debt commission placed on our heads. So we ought to get serious.

For fiscal year 2011, the administration's budget projects a deficit of $1.6 trillion. Without changes in our current policies, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that our Federal debt will be 95 percent of GDP the gross domestic product of our Nation. Today, as we are here, we are borrowing 40 cents of every single dollar we spend—borrowing 40 cents. We borrow a lot of it to be able to afford to buy the source of our energy from other countries, and much of the dollars we borrow in order to go into debt to buy energy from other countries winds up making us less secure. This is not a smart cycle, not a virtuous cycle. Certainly, it is not something we are locked into. We have a whole set of other choices.

Let me point out to my colleagues that spending is at the highest level as a share of our economy than it has been in more than 60 years. We are spending more than we have spent as a share of our economy at any time in 60 years. But we are also collecting less revenue than we have ever collected in the last 60 years. There is something wrong with that equation.

It seems to me clear—and many of us objected and opposed the tax cut that wound up putting us in this predicament—that we have been on a binge of political sloganeering. It has been appealing to the easiest instinct of every American. Who doesn't feel they don't pay too much? The fact is that the burden we pay is far less than many other countries. It is at about the lowest level in our history—the least amount of revenue in the last 60 years. That is part of what contributes to our debt. It also robs us of a whole set of other choices in terms of American competitiveness.

Let me point out, to listen to the Members of the House and some of our colleagues, you would think the President didn't do anything about this. In fact, the President is the only person who put a realistic budget before us. The President is the only person who really put in a plan to reduce the overall debt, not just a CR on a temporary basis but an overall budget with a plan for how you grow America and reduce our deficit. The President's budget does significantly reduce deficits.

I remember in the 1990s when we faced this very question. I remind my colleagues that we did balance the budget. The last President and party to balance the budget was President Bill Clinton and the Democrats. We did it jointly, working together in a responsible way. It wasn't just that we increased revenues and reduced spending. What was critical was—they all met within 1, 2, or 3 years—that we sent a message to the marketplace and the American people that we were serious about turning our deficit into a surplus.

I believe that as we go forward we have a responsibility to understand that we need to have a responsible set of choices put in front of us. We are locked in a debate that is not actually trying to find common ground right now. Ask this question: Is everything on the table in a serious effort to create jobs and advance America's economic leadership? Is it really impossible for us to sit down together across the aisle and come to an agreement as to what helps us grow and what doesn't? Is it really true that American Senators have the inability to be able to agree as to where the benefit comes to the economy in the multiplier effect with respect to science research or technology research or other kinds of things we can excite in the private sector?

Completely absent from this debate is an honest discussion of what actions only the government is actually equipped to take in order to bolster our global competitiveness. Every CEO in America knows there are some things that only the government can do. Look at President Eisenhower's National System of Interstate Highways in the 1950s. By today's standards, we could not build it. It would not happen by today's standards. But the fact is, more than 30 or 40 percent, maybe 50 percent, of America's productivity increases came as a consequence of the building

of the Interstate Highway System, not to mention billions of dollars' worth of spinoff jobs and tax revenues to our communities. We are still living off that inheritance. We are living off the infrastructure investments of those who went before us.

Today, China is investing 9 percent of its GDP into infrastructure. Europe is investing 5 percent of its GDP into infrastructure. The United States, just about 2 percent, slightly less. We have a $2.2 trillion infrastructure deficit.

What we have not been discussing in this debate is what we need to invest in, a coherent strategy, a policy to make certain we are not held hostage to oil and instability in the Middle East.

The United States could become the first country to have 1 million electric vehicles on the road by 2015 and ensure that 80 percent of our electricity comes from clean energy sources and with that comes jobs. We need a cutting-edge, high-speed wireless data network. We still do not have one. We are going backward. We invented the technologies. We used to be No. 3 or No. 4. Now we are drifting back to No. 16 or No. 21, depending on whose measurement we look at. By any measurement and any standard, we are going backward, while other countries are going forward, and it is because we are not investing and making it attractive for the private sector or private citizens to achieve this.

America has always been a competitive country. Our DNA is innovation and creativity and entrepreneurial activity. The fact is, we are not doing the things we could do in joint venture with the private sector to attract the best jobs and create the best opportunities. We have to become that nation again. That is what our budget ought to be discussing, and we ought to be able to agree across party lines as to how we do that.

The budget passed by the House of Representatives not only does not present a realistic set of choices with respect to how we make America competitive and create higher paying jobs and grow our economy, not only does it not do that, it actually strips away the opportunities to do that. It takes us backward.

The House budget is going to lower the deficit by only 6 percent because they are focused only on domestic discretionary spending. They do not focus on defense spending. They do not focus on Medicaid, Medicare, entitlements. They do not focus on some of the waste and duplication within the system. They just strip away at a whole bunch of programs that many of them have opposed for their entire life in politics and voted against in the first place. They are using the opportunity of this budget to press an ideological agenda. That is why only 13 percent of the budget is being focused on in what they are doing.

They have sworn off any discussion of the very hard choices. Here we are 3 months after the Commission put forward its important proposals, and the Senate is trapped in a political moment when what we need is a moment of truth.

We have to find a way to make these tougher choices. I wish to be clear about what I think they are. I ask my colleagues: Do we want a government that is too limited to have invented the Internet? A lot of people do not think about that, but the fact is, the government invented the Internet. It was a spinoff from DARPA, from research into how we might be able to communicate in the case of nuclear war. We were creating this communications network which became the Internet. Then the private sector saw the opportunities and took those opportunities and translated them into what we have today, which has revolutionized the way people communicate and do business. But it came from the government, just as digitalization came from government research, the space program, which also produced Gortex and microwave and Teflon and a host of other products that are now out in the marketplace where we have created millions of jobs. The Internet created more than a million jobs and has added greatly to the gross domestic product of our country.

We want to have a country that is so limited that we do not do those kinds of things? Taxes so low that everybody feels good, thinks they are better off, but we do not do the research that is necessary to create jobs and new industries and fill the Treasury with the revenue that educates our children, cures to diseases and provides opportunities for poor people to break out of poverty and touch the brass ring of America.

We have to get past the slogans and the sound bites. We have to reason together and talk about the things America does best.

If we are going to balance the budget and create jobs, we cannot pretend we are going to do it by eliminating earmarks and government waste. We have to look at how we did it previously.

In the early 1990s, our economy was faltering because deficits were too big and debt was freezing capital. We had to send a signal to the market that we were capable of being fiscally responsible. Guess what. We did it, and we did it without a reckless assault on a whole series of things that make a difference to the quality of life of our country and to our ability to create jobs. We saw our economy turn around in the 1990s, and we created 22 million jobs. We created unprecedented wealth in America. Every single income level in our country saw their income go up in the 1990s. We created more wealth in the 1990s than we created in the 1920s and 1930s with the great barons of wealth of that period—the Carnegies, Mellons, and so forth. We did it by committing the country to a disciplined path, where we spoke to the potential of the American people.

Working with the Republicans—it was bipartisan—we came up with a framework that put our country on a track to be debt free by 2012, for the first time since Andrew Jackson's administration. The fact is, Alan Greenspan was warning America and the Senate that we were paying down our debt too fast and that could have implications on the marketplace.

We know how to do this in a responsible way. How we got off track from that is a story I am not going to go back into right now. It is pretty well known. But the truth of how we generated the 1990s economic boom is a story that has to be retold again and again.

Let me point out the difference. We are not going to do this process in 2 weeks. We know that. We ought to have a responsible CR that allows us to go forward and give ourselves a proper amount of time to tackle these larger issues and put something serious on the table with tax reform spending, entitlements—all those issues on the table.

What we have in this House budget—let me point out, rather than say it takes us backward. I believe there are reckless cuts in this budget that would do great harm to our country because it strips away our ability to create the future. Research and development in technology, research and development in science, the National Institutes of Health—a host of these things are cut in a draconian way.

I had lunch the other day with the Secretary of the Navy. He was telling me how the House budget has cut ARPA–E program. It has cut it from about $250 million down to $50 million. The House bill effectively shuts off all the projects.

Do you know what some of those projects are? One is our military's ability to have greater capacity in the field, to have solar or wind or battery storage so they do not have to run convoys of fuel to keep vehicles and supply our troops with the administrative support they need.

They say the military has done a study. For every 24 convoys for fuel, we lose one marine or soldier—one marine or soldier for every 24 convoys. They are looking at ways to reduce having those convoys, and they are cutting the money so our military will be more dependent on the fossil fuel that comes from unstable countries in various parts of the world.

Mr. President, how much time do I have remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 6½ minutes remaining.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, China is racing ahead with respect to these kinds of investments. The fact is, they are sending their students to the United States for degrees in math, science, and engineering, but the House is cutting Pell grants so there is a 15-percent cut below the maximum level, which would affect over 100,000 students in college, making it less affordable, less accessible for low- and moderate-income students. That is not a

budget that helps our economy. It does nothing with dealing with the deficit and jobs.

They tie the hands of the Consumer Product Safety Commission so they cannot launch a database for consumer products. If you are an average American, you do not need to know if the products you buy are safe or will harm you. That does not matter anymore, even though it has nothing to do with dealing with the budget problem.

They reduce Federal funds from being spent for Planned Parenthood, for doctors and nurses to conduct 1 million lifesaving screenings for cervical cancer and more than 830,000 breast cancer exams. I guess it is much more important that millionaires, people earning more than $1 million a year, get their tax cut than 830,000 women to have breast cancer screenings. This value system is something that I think is absolutely essential for us to examine.

The House cuts almost $2 billion from the clean water and drinking water State funds that allow us to capitalize on low-interest loans and no-interest loans so we can build and refurbish clean water systems.

All across our country, we have communities that are under court orders to clean up the water for our citizens. The House is cutting the ability of those communities to be able to provide for that because most of them do not have the tax base to do it on their own.

The House bill prohibits the EPA—that discussion took place, and I will skip over it. It has nothing to do with deficit reduction. It just prohibits the EPA from enforcing clean air laws, after the American people decided in 1970 they wanted clean air, and people's lives have been improved because we have provided it. We are going to go backward there.

I mentioned the ARPA–E cuts. The House bill cuts $780 million below the current level for energy efficiency and renewable energy, which is going to cut critical programs that advance our job base.

I met yesterday with the CEO of a major solar company. They are going to create a huge number of jobs in the Southwest of our country. The largest facilities are going to be in Arizona and California. But by cutting the loan guarantee program, we are going to lose 1,200 jobs just on the California project, and that does not include the $½ billion of equipment from U.S. suppliers in nine States, including Arizona, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Colorado, and Kansas. That is a loss of jobs in every single one of those States.

The House bill reduces funding for the National Institutes of Standards and Technology, which is going to reduce research and hurt job creation. It slashes funding for the National Science Foundation by more than $300 million. That is 1,800 fewer research and education grants.

The House bill provides $787 million below the current level for energy efficiency and renewable energy. It would significantly delay needed investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy R&D, demonstration and deployment programs critical to the transition to a clean energy economy.

The U.S. stands to be the world leader in concentrated solar with the addition of these two projects, but this title is in jeopardy thanks to more irresponsible and irrational cuts in H.R. 1.The proposed elimination of the DOE loan guarantee program for clean energy cost jobs, American competitiveness, and immediate economic benefits. For example, yesterday I met with Abengoa Solar, a company trying to help the U.S. become the world leader in concentrated solar with two of the largest facilities in Arizona and California. But by cutting the loan guarantee program we stand to lose 1,200 jobs from just the California project. In addition this doesn't include the $½ billion of equipment from U.S. suppliers in nine States across the U.S. including Arizona, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Colorado, and Kansas.

The House bill slashes $1.3 billion from the National Institutes of Health, NIH, which would force NIH to reduce support for more than 25,000 existing research grants and scale back clinical trials and research projects. These drastic cuts will devastate biomedical research; cures will be delayed, jobs will be eliminated, and American leadership and innovation will be jeopardized. NIH is the primary Federal agency responsible for conducting and supporting medical research, most of which is done at medical schools, hospitals, universities and research institutes distributed in every State in the country. NIH-funded research drives scientific innovation and develops new and better diagnostics, prevention strategies, and more effective treatments. NIH-funded research also contributes to the Nation's economic strength by creating skilled, high-paying jobs; new products and industries; and improved technologies.

They do that even as we know that continued commitment to NIH is essential for securing a strong national economy and for maintaining our leadership as the global leader in research and development. Everyone applauded when President Obama said in his 2011 State of the Union Address that ''one key to future growth in the U.S. economy will be to encourage American innovation and job creation by investing in research and development—including biomedical research at the NIH.'' And Massachusetts received more than $2.5 billion in NIH grants last year alone. But here we are gutting the NIH because we are afraid to look at the things that need to be addressed that yield real savings.

Folks, this is killing our economic competitiveness in the cradle—and in the laboratories. Investment in the NIH produces a steady stream of talented researchers who lead the way to treatments and cures for some of the world's most devastating diseases. In fact, a report by Families USA estimated NIH awards to the States results in over 351,000 jobs that pay an average annual wage of more than $52,000, and results in $50.5 billion in increased output of goods and services to the U.S. The jobs, the spinoff industries, and the local development that are sustained by NIH awards will disappear or relocate to more competitive nations—such as China or India—without continued and stable funding for the NIH.

The House bill reduces funding for the National Institute of Standards and Technology by $223 million which will reduce research and hurt job creation. The House bill slashes funding for the National Science Foundation by more than $300 million below current levels meaning 1,800 fewer research and education grants.

Earlier this month, 300 of America's leading economists, including Alan Blinder and Laura Tyson, sent an open letter to President Obama and Members of Congress concerning these cuts, and they said it is shortsighted to make cuts that eliminate necessary investments in our human capital, our infrastructure, and the next generation of scientific and technological advances. They said: Republican-planned cuts threaten our economy's long-term economic competitiveness and the strength of our current economic recovery. The letter goes on to say that we need to look and sustain the critical investments in the productive capacity of the United States.

Mr. President, you are a farmer, and there ain't a farmer in the country who doesn't know you don't eat your seed corn. But that is what we are doing here. We are eating our seed corn. We are stripping away America's already challenged ability to compete against a China, India, Brazil, Mexico, South Korea, and countless countries that are indicating far more seriousness than we are about their desire to build out and build a future.

We have a train that runs from Washington to New York called the Acela. It can go 150 miles an hour. But it only goes 150 miles an hour for 18 miles of that trip between here and New York. Why? Because if it goes too fast into the tunnel in Baltimore, the tunnel may cave in; because if it goes too fast over the bridges of the Chesapeake, they may fall down. But you can go to China and ride on a train that goes 200 miles an hour and the water in your glass doesn't even move; or 300 miles an hour in the Maglev train from Shanghai airport to downtown Shanghai. Go to Abu Dhabi, go to Dubai, go to Paris, or any major airport in Europe and you will find an airport that outshines the airports of the United States and you will find public transit systems that outshine the public transit systems of the United States. Because once again, we are living off what our parents and grandparents built because we are not willing to pay for anything, which is why revenue in the United States is at a 60-year low.

We need to be smart about where we are going here. The GDP of our country is measured by our total expenditures of consumption of the American people, it is measured by our investments, it is measured by government spending and investment, and by our exports minus our imports. That is the GDP. That is how you measure GDP. How can these folks sit here and say if you cut the government spending you are not going to cut the GDP, which is what every major economic analysis has said?

So yes, we have to cut waste; yes, we have to cut some spending; yes, we have to be responsible. But let us be responsible in a responsible way, by looking at the overall budget and the places we can reduce, at a tempo that doesn't do injury to our ability to invest in America's future, to create the jobs for the future, but nevertheless send the right message to the marketplace and to the American people.

We have done that before. We saw the longest expansion in America's history. Staring us in the face is the largest economic opportunity of a lifetime. The energy marketplace is a $6 trillion market with 6 billion potential users today, rising to about 9 billion over the next 30 years. But we are not engaged in that. Two years ago, China produced 5 percent of the world's solar panels. Today, they produce 60 percent, and the United States doesn't have one company in the top 10 companies of the world's solar panel producers. What are we doing? The biggest transformational market staring the United States in the face is the energy market, and we should be here putting an energy policy in place, an education policy in place, an infrastructure investment policy in place, and a research policy for technology and medical that soars, that takes America into the future, creates the jobs we need for the next generations, and reduces the deficit in responsible ways, not in this unbelievable reckless, meat axe, hatchet budget that is being presented to us by the House of Representatives. We need to find common ground.

The minority continues to criticize President Obama about the lack of progress in creating jobs. Last month, the economy added 192,000 jobs and the unemployment rate declined from 9 percent to 8.9 percent. This is one of the best job reports since the recession began more than 3 years ago. It shows that the economic recovery is beginning to gain momentum. However the unemployment rate is still too high and we need both small and big businesses to increase jobs if we are going to see a meaningful decrease in unemployment. The House continuing resolution will make that more difficult.

Republican economist Mark Zandi says that now is not the time to implement the cuts included in the House continuing resolution. In a recent report, Zandi said. ''The economy is adding between 100,000 and 150,000 per month—but it must add closer to 200,000 jobs per month before we can say the economy is truly expanding again. Imposing additional government spending cuts before this has happened, as House Republicans want, would be taking an unnecessary chance with the recovery.''

Zandi estimates that the cuts included in the Republican continuing resolution would lead to 700,000 fewer jobs by the end of 2012. Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke said last week that the Republican continuing resolution would reduce growth and cost our economy about a couple hundred thousand jobs.

Last month, a Goldman Sachs economist warned that the Republican cuts could reduce economic growth in the United States by 1.5 to 2 percentage points this year.

Additional spending cuts would also go against the thrust of our economic policies. The Federal Reserve is holding short-term interest rates close to zero and purchasing hundreds of billions of dollars in long-term Treasury bonds, in an effort to hold down long-term interest rates. The tax cut agreement we made last year is also helping to create jobs and boost our economy. It doesn't raise taxes, includes a 2 percent payroll tax holiday, extends emergency unemployment insurance benefits and allows businesses to expense their investments this year.

The American people deserve better than the approach taken by the House of Representatives that cuts critically needed research funding, eliminates jobs and reduce economic growth, hurts our competitiveness and could push our economy into a ''double dip'' recession.

There is a better way for us to resolve our budget problems. Let's go back to what worked before and can work again if we are willing to bite the bullet. In the early 1990s, our economy was faltering because deficits and debt were freezing capital. We had to send a signal to the market that we were capable of being fiscally responsible. We did just that and as result we saw the longest economic expansion in history, created more than 22 million jobs, and generated unprecedented wealth in America, with every income bracket rising. But we did it by making tough choices.

Now is the moment for America to reach for the brass energy ring—to go for the Moon here on Earth by building our new energy future—and, in doing so, create millions of steady, higher paying jobs at every level of the economy. Make no mistake: Jobs that produce energy in America are jobs that stay in America. The amount of work to be done here is just stunning. It is the work of many lifetimes. And it must begin now. This shouldn't be a partisan issue, but instead of coming together to meet the defining test of a new energy economy and our future.

There is a bipartisan consensus just waiting to lift our country and our future if Senators are willing to sit down and forge it and make it real. The President's fiscal commission made very clear that our budget cannot be balanced by cutting spending alone. The American people deserve a serious dialogue and adult conversation within the Congress about our fiscal situation, discretionary spending, entitlements, and revenues. We need to work together in a bipartisan process to develop a long-term solution to reduce both our current budget deficit and our staggering debt. And, yes, we will need to reduce Federal spending and make appropriate changes to our entitlement programs to meet the fiscal challenges facing our country. But everything everything—tax reform, spending and entitlements—needs to be on the table.

Mr. President, this is one of the moments the Senate was intended to live up to to provide leadership. To find common ground. To level with the American people and be honest with each other. We will no doubt continue to be frustrated and angry from time to time, but I believe that more often than not, we can rise to the common ground of great national purpose. A lot of us like to talk about American exceptionalism. But now we need to get beyond the permanent campaign and the ideological agenda—and instead do the exceptional things that will keep America exceptional for generations to come.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all remaining morning business time be yielded back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, morning business is closed.

PATENT REFORM ACT OF 2011

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 23, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 23) to amend title 35, United States Code, to provide for patent reform.

Pending:

Reid/Ensign amendment No. 143, to include public institutions of higher education in EPSCOR jurisdictions in the definition of a micro entity.

Reid amendment No. 152 (to Reid amendment No. 143), to provide an effective date.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, American ingenuity and innovation have been a cornerstone of the American economy from the time Thomas Jefferson examined the first patent to today. The Founders recognized the importance of promoting innovation. The Constitution explicitly grants Congress the