2-, 3-, 4-month deals, that is disastrous to this economy.

I have heard and talked to business leaders after business leader, from associations, to individuals, to people back in my home state, and they say over and over again: I do not want short term. I want to hear you, ever you decide, give us certainty—certainty.

The unique thing about the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House: Only we would describe this as 16, 18 months, because that is all we can do around here. But short term, as one can imagine, is 3, 4 months. That would be more disruptive to this economy than anything we can imagine because all we do as we shift it—and I can describe this because I understand this business. I have been in it. My wife is in it. Here is what happens.

We will have this same debate in November, probably. Here is what happens in November. This is the biggest time for people who are buying. For retailers, this is the most important time—actually, back to school a little bit, but November through December is when people make their expenditures and are buying things, consuming, and spending our economy. But people always like to blame Democrats: It is all about government. I come from the private sector. As I said earlier, that is where I made my living. It is an important part of our economy.

So, when we are going to debate, create more uncertainty at the most important time, when consumers are going to try to judge what to do. What do they do? Do they spend a little bit extra, or do they plan their trip, or do they plan what they go on that trip they were planning? Do they make that extra expenditure? Yet we will have the same debate. So long term is important—again, 16, 18 months, but that is better than the short term.

No businessperson has come to me—and I challenge any businessperson: Pick up the phone. Call me. Let me know. Tell me you want a short term, and I will be happy to come down here to this chamber to talk about that. I will pick up your company name. I will tell people: This company is interested in short term. I would be happy to do that. I am not going to get those calls because they know that is not the way to run a business, that is not the way to run a household, and that sure as heck should not be the way we run our government.

So there is a clear difference. For all of the people who—I get a lot of pro and con on this issue, calling my office, sending me e-mails—for all of those people who say: Hey, just vote for the Boehner thing, I will tell them why I will not. I want people to understand clearly. It is not about being a Republican. I am a Democrat. That is irrelevant. It is short term. It is fewer spending reductions. It keeps us in turmoil. It doesn’t move us forward. It is all about shenanigans and game-playing and politics. That is what he is presenting.

Now, maybe the Reid proposal isn’t perfect. I know there are Republicans who have some ideas here in the Senate who want to modify it. Great. But it is long term, it has more significant reductions, and it moves us down a path in the right direction. It is not perfect, but I can tell my colleagues that the idea they have over there will not work for this economic climate.

I have probably spoken too long, but those kids from Juneau and Healy and Anchorage and Kodiak had a great question. When kids are asking that question and I give them the same exact presentation, I say: Here are the differences. I give them the papers and say: Here, you look at it. And they say to me: Why aren’t we doing a long term, because these kids are now at an age where they are thinking about their future. They are not thinking about the next weekend; they are thinking about their future. They have a position we could learn a lot from around this place, I will tell my colleagues they made it very clear to me: Whatever you do, make it long term, because they are thinking about their future and where they want to be. It is an incredible commentary when we have kids who have more wherewithal in the sense of their knowledge of what should be done in the body we sit in today. It should wake us up.

The last thing I will note is this. I think about what my colleague from Colorado said about the value of our position to try to ensure that people understand America will stand behind everything we do—the debt we do, the positions we take. As a matter of fact, it was so important, it was written into the Constitution that we should never question the ability to pay our bills.

For those on the other side who like to spout off, and they pull out of their pocket the little portable Constitution—all of us get those; we all have them—and I talk to my friends who go on that trip they were planning to do: The debt we do, the positions we take. As a matter of fact, it was so important, it was written into the Constitution that we should never question the ability to pay our bills.

So, again, I thank the Chair for the time, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, are we in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are in morning business.

TRIBUTE TO BERT BLYLEVEN

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to former Minnesota Twins pitcher Bert Blyleven, who this week received his sport’s highest honor when he was inducted into the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame.

To Bert, I offer hearty and well-deserved congratulations.

To the rest of the baseball world, I ask the question: What took so long?

In the 14 years since he first became eligible for the Hall of Fame, we in Minnesota all assumed that, with his rare talent and Hall of Fame numbers, Bert was a shoo-in, and for many of those 14 years he was considered the best player never to have been inducted. I am proud to say as a Minnesotan and a lifelong Twins fan that this year Bert Blyleven was officially voted into the Hall of Fame.

People in Minnesota all know Bert belongs on the distinguished list of Minnesota Twins already in the Hall of Fame, including Harmon Killebrew, Rod Carew, and Kirby Puckett, as well as two other baseball greats who grew up in St. Paul, MN, and later played for the Twins and were inducted into the Hall of Fame: Paul Molitor and Dave Winfield. Each of them had Hall of Fame careers, and now Bert has finally joined them.

Bert pitched 22 seasons in the Major Leagues, 11 of them for the Twins, but he also took his talents to Texas, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and California. During his career, he won 287 games, he struck out an amazing 3,701 batters, and is fifth on the all-time career strikeout list, with more career strikeouts than pitching greats Tom Seaver, Walter Johnson, Bob Gibson, Greg Maddux, and Cy Young. In fact, Bert is often referred to as Minnesota’s very own Sandy Koufax.

Bert is a shoo-in into the Baseball Hall of Fame, and his induction will be a great day for all of Minnesota. Bert is a Minnesotan, a quintessential Minnesota Twins legend, and he has been a legend for all of Minnesota. I thank the Chair for allowing me to discuss this today.

To Bert, I offer hearty and well-deserved congratulations.

We are in morning business.

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE
July 28, 2011
Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator may speak for up to 15 minutes.

NATIONAL DEBT

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I think it is obvious to the world around us that the atmosphere here is hardly one of comfort — it is one of dissatisfaction. The public does not see the agony of the debate that is taking place, as we watch how dysfunctional the discussion about the national debt has been.

We feel the threat to America's world financial leadership that is lurking around here, and it is not very satisfying to those people whose homes are close to foreclosure or the people who need to be assured that health care is going to be there for them or that their kids will go to college, get an education without mortgaging their future or cannot even get a mortgage on that.

So we look around and we watch and we listen and we see that the Republicans in the House and the Republicans in the Senate are demanding a political gain regardless of the cost to our society and our Nation.

I do not make this statement casually. But after months of watching and listening to the targeted goal of politicians over the past year, that could follow a default, no other conclusion can be drawn.

We want to consider the evidence. By way of example, Vice President BIDEN convened a bipartisan working group to find solutions to get the national debt problem over with, get it resolved, and let us go on to our normal and needed debate and business. After that, Republicans walked out. Walked out.

Next, President Obama offered Republicans what he called a "grand deal" that included a $1 trillion in cuts for every dollar the debt limit is increased — and not even insisting on a dollar of revenues, which has been suggested several times.

But there is no wave of getting through the obstinacy on the other side. Republicans turn their back time and time again. Democrats in this Senate and in the White House have offered the Republicans compromise after compromise. But they do not see their target. Their target is to do damage to the Obama administration so that it hurts sufficiently to discount the progress that has been made for our society under President Obama.

Time and time again the Republicans have changed their demands to find reasons to say no. Are we asking the Republicans to do something radical, some things that have never been done before? That is certainly not the case. Over the past half century, the debt ceiling has been raised 75 times, almost two-thirds of those occasions under Republican Presidents. In fact, the debt ceiling was increased 18 times under President Reagan, and 7 times under President George W. Bush.

Our country has never defaulted. So the question that I have is: What is different about today? Why, at a time when we already face a real jobs crisis in this country, would Republicans plan for another economic crisis? Why would they do that? Will destroying the economy help Republicans win seats next year when people across our country are already expressing their dissatisfaction with the deadlock they see being displayed?

We heard the minority leader say his No. 1 priority is stopping the President from winning another term. What a goal that is. He is our President, elected by the people of the country. He has a term of 4 years and will be up for reelection. We hope and we pray that he continues to be the President of our country. But what good does it do to target the system?

Make known what it is they stand for. So far we have seen that they stand for nothing that is helpful to the average American. So what we need is a chance to have an honest discussion. Insecurity reigns as people grow more and more conscious about their inability to afford the basics of life, jobs, health care, education. They see prices being raised around them as their purchasing power shrinks. Look at the price of gasoline. You see a perfect example of what is happening. We had one Republican Presidential candidate who was asked: "Does it strike you that as the unemployment rate goes up your chances of winning office also go up?"

Do you know what her answer was? She said, "I hope so." Hope so. What an outrageous thing to say from the halls of government, the high halls of government. I hope so. I hope that unemployment goes up, says she, so she might have a chance to win office. How cruel that statement is.

Make no mistake, if the United States Treasury runs out of cash next week, the principal burden will fall on middle-class families. But the effects on our total economy will be devastating as well. We may not be able to send out Social Security checks to seniors, benefit checks to veterans, unemployment checks to the working class, the country. Let's stop paying them? Or paychecks to the men and women who now bear our country's uniform in Afghanistan and Iraq. Sorry, we cannot pay you. Is that what we are going to say?

Interest rates could rise almost immediately, greatly increasing the cost of mortgages, car loans, student loans, credit cards, you name it. If middle-class Americans think their 401(k) plan suffered during the Wall Street crisis a few years ago, imagine what a happenstance that may well be for all the money our country is already printing. Since September, interest rates have fallen to levels that have only been seen during the Second World War,朋友们。