

reducing growth but would really begin to solidify public confidence that we have a smart plan to get out of this debt.

If we just slow the spending growth to 3.4 percent a year over the next 10 years, we could balance this budget without raising taxes. You have heard that said. It is true. This is true. We do not have to have substantial spending cuts; we can do it and still have growth.

Some programs need to be cut. Some programs have to be cut. Some programs are growing much faster than 3.4 percent. Medicaid is growing at 8 percent. It needs to be reformed. We can't sustain that kind of increase year after year after year.

Most Americans know the old story about the rule of seven. If you increase something at 7 percent a year on your savings account, it doubles in 10 years. So if you have 8 percent, you are seeing a 117-percent increase in spending over 10 years.

So if we allow 3.4 percent a year in spending growth, that means we would spend \$11,000 per person in 2022, 10 years out—\$11,000 per person by the Federal Government. That is a higher rate of spending per person than we had in 2007. Yet we are going broke.

We can reduce spending without affecting services. We can. Federal programs—many of them—are very wasteful, very inefficient, duplicative, and subject to fraud. I just held up the GAO 2012 report that listed a pile—page after page—of programs that are wasteful, duplicative, and so forth. We have social service, domestic disaster assistance, Internal Revenue Service enforcement efforts that all have duplicative gaps and are not properly managed. They talk about how the programs are duplicative, how the programs are mismanaged, how they need to be tightened up, and there is a whole list of these things. There are about 50 different major programs—51—that need reform. We haven't done any of that.

What does Congress say to the American people? Well, we don't have time to execute, carry out, or study GAO's report. That is too much work. Just send us more money. No, we don't have time to do this. You don't understand—these little programs, they do not save much money. They do not make any difference. We don't have to focus on them. Send us more money. You have to send us more money.

I think the American people may be getting tired of this.

Nine different agencies, according to GAO, run over 50 job-training programs for people with disabilities. This budget proposes to create more. We had an amendment offered at the Budget Committee that would create another job program. I mean, we have them all over the place. It sounded like a good idea. Something good happened in some State, so we have a plan to offer Federal legislation to do it here or expand it.

Last year alone, Washington paid out \$44 billion to people who, through deceit or error, did not deserve Medicare payments. Let me repeat. Forty-four billion dollars was paid out to people who, through deceit or error, did not deserve Medicare payments. That is more money than we spend running our national parks, the FBI, the Federal Aviation Administration, the Army Corps of Engineers' civil works projects, and the Internal Revenue Service combined. Forty-four billion is a lot. That is just about what the Federal highway budget is—\$44 billion. Fraud, deceit, and error out the door in Medicare alone.

Well, Mr. President, we have been at it a long time. I am very unhappy that the budget process has been shifted to the end of the week. I am very unhappy that we are at a point where we are not going to have as full a debate because people are going to be stressed, they are going to be here at night and maybe into the weekend. Somebody may say: Well, SESSIONS, it is your fault. Why don't you just yield back this time? But it would take every Senator here to yield back the time. And if I did, I am sure somebody would object. And I am not yielding back time now.

We have problems. We can yield, we can work through the night, we can compromise tonight and maybe save a few hours, or we can work to be as accommodating to our colleagues as we can. I am willing to do that. But I just have to say that this budget should have been up earlier. We should have reached an agreement with Senators MORAN and AYOTTE and given them amendments early in the week or last week, and we could have had the budget up Monday. We wouldn't have had all this fuss. We would have had Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and we would have had a full day, completed all amendments, and been out of here. But, oh no, I think there is something to the fact that it was considered to be a good idea just to carry this budget over to the end of the week and that Senators would want to leave and we would just wrap it all up, do it in the dead of night so the American people wouldn't see, perhaps, what is going to be done, wouldn't pay much attention to the votes, and we could get out of here and do the least possible public discussion of this bad budget that we can.

Now, some might say: Well, that is really not so.

I think it is so. We haven't had a budget on the floor for 4 years. Why? Senator REID said publicly that it is foolish to have a budget. Why did he say that? He meant it was foolish politically. I have said this before. He knows how I feel about it.

He said it was foolish—politically, basically—to have a budget. Why? Because writing a budget requires a party to lay out their vision for the future, to be prepared to defend it in public debate, and to have amendments on it. He has been controlling this Senate to

a degree no majority leader has ever controlled the Senate, and the one thing he is not able to control is the budget process: You have 50 hours and virtually unlimited amendments. He didn't want to do that. So he was willing to violate the law of the United States and not bring up a budget so he wouldn't have to do this.

Finally, this year the House got fed up. They have been passing an honest budget that lays out a future plan for America. They have defended it publicly. They have taken unfair attacks and abuse for doing their duty every year—like they are supposed to do.

So they sent over a bill this year. It said: No budget, no pay, Congress. If you don't bring up your budget, you don't get paid. So now we have a budget for the first time in 4 years. Maybe the House should be given a medal for that.

But I am not happy. I don't believe we are doing this right. I was disappointed that for the first time in 3 years, when a budget was brought up in the Senate committee, we had statements made one afternoon for a few hours before we even saw the chairman's mark. It was produced after that, and we had 1 day—the next day—to offer amendments. That wasn't a very good process, in my view.

If we really want to deal with the debt—the greatest danger of our time—and deal with it properly, why wouldn't we want to have an open public hearing? Why wouldn't we have had expert witnesses all year to help talk to us? We had a few hearings, but we could have had a lot more because this has complex questions for us to decide. We should have had more time in committee, and we should have had full time on the floor of the Senate. So I don't make any bones about it. I wish we had done it differently.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

PRESIDENT'S MIDDLE EAST TRIP

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, President Obama arrived in the Middle East today. It is his first visit as President to Israel and the West Bank.

Some in the press have focused on the fact that the White House has lowered expectations for what will be accomplished in the 3 days of the President's visit. Others, including Members