

with people who entered the country? They had a soap opera series of videos, and this is what they did: A lady speaks to another lady and she says something about food stamps. The other lady says, Well, my husband has a good job. I don't need food stamps. That is the first scene. The first lady says, Well, you don't understand.

After two or three of these videos, the first lady convinces the second lady that she should ask for these benefits when she said she didn't want them. She was a lady of pride and dignity. She didn't think she had to have this and wasn't asking for it. But our government overcame her resistance. The U.S. Department of Agriculture was promoting this and paid money to buy these ads: Don't worry, we will ask the American people to send more money. But we won't ask you to send more, we will ask the rich to send more money.

I remember years ago George Wallace used to want to tax the power company. He always wanted to tax the power companies. I was looking at my electric bill the other day and they list your charges, and one of them is the State tax. So they taxed the power company, and the power company passes it on to the person who buys the electricity. Give me a break. A tax on the economy is a tax on the economy. It is a weak argument that you can have an unlimited amount of money by taxing the rich. At some point it becomes not correct, not fair, and not right if the money is being thrown away on Solyndras and A-123 battery companies that go bankrupt. But nobody worries about it: Send more money.

We are having abuses in the SNAP program, and I proposed an amendment that would eliminate an abusive part of the food stamp program a year ago. In 2001, we spent \$20 billion a year on SNAP. Last year, we spent \$80 billion. It has gone up, from 20 to 80, four times. We identified a categorical eligibility gimmick that was allowing people to get food stamps who did not qualify and should not have received them. I said, Let's close that loophole. Over 10 years we were projected to spend \$800 billion on the food stamp program. This would have reduced it by 11, so we would have been spending \$789 billion instead of \$800 billion. And do you know what they said? Sessions wants to take food out of the mouths of babies. People are going to starve. He is uncompassionate. He is unkind. He wants to chop the budget so we can hurt people. It was voted down. And we had reports showing that this was an abusive practice that should have been fixed.

Now we want to ask the American people, Send more money. We want to tax you more. Well, what about the abuse in the food stamp program? There is no abuse. The Department of Agriculture said we have less fraud than we have ever had in history. And I used to prosecute that as a Federal prosecutor. I know there is fraud in

there. We established without any doubt that their claim that they have minimal fraud is only in the computer part of the program.

Nobody is checking to see if somebody who qualified for any of these government programs later gets a job and doesn't meet the qualifications. They still are getting benefits all over the country, unless they self-report. All kinds of things such as this are going on. No one is checking to see if somebody goes into two food stamp offices, two other benefit offices of various kinds and asks for them under different names at each place and produces some sort of ID. There is all kinds of abuse in this system and I hear it all the time.

Most people who get food stamps need it, they qualify for it, and they would get it under any kind of reasonable reform that would occur. But to suggest that we aren't wasting money through practices that allow unqualified individuals to gain access to multiple programs of this kind is a mistake. It absolutely happens every day.

I tried cases to a jury of stores selling food stamps, manipulating the program, dealing with corrupt individuals who brought the food stamps in to sell because they had obtained them fraudulently and never needed the food at all. This idea that there is no fraud in this program is ludicrous. That is what the leaders of the Department of Agriculture are saying: We have no problem. It is OK. Just send us more money. We will keep expanding and growing every year—maybe double the thing again, I guess.

These are the kinds of things that I believe this budget does not address. This budget allows spending to continue at its current rate, it allows the debt to continue at its current rate. Spending goes up and taxes go up. That is what this budget does. Spending goes up and taxes go up and the deficit is not reduced.

I hope that somehow we will come to our senses, go back home, and talk to our constituents. We will listen to them when they plead with us to do something about the debt course we are on. They tell us they are disgusted with the way things are going in Washington, and we say: We cannot do anything about it. They said there is not a problem. You don't understand the challenge we face. We really have to have more money. That is what we have to have. We can't get by on the money we have been having. We have to increase the money you give us.

Do you know that if we increase spending every year 3.4 percent—and these figures are not disputed—if we increase spending each year 3.4 percent, we could balance the budget? The problem is that our spending is increasing at 5.4 percent. It is hard to believe that difference would cause as many billion dollars in debt as it does, but it does. Each year, we add hundreds of billions of dollars to the debt. In fact, the last 4 years we have averaged adding \$1,100

billion to the debt each year. As those dollars are added to the debt, we pay interest on them, and interest is surging.

We are going to find, according to the CBO, on the course we are on and on the course we would stay on if this budget passes, that we would not do anything different than where we are today, which means we would be paying about \$800 billion in 1 year in interest. The road bill is \$40 billion, education is about \$100 billion—it is going to crowd out spending for every agency in our government. For research and development—we are just going to keep raising taxes now?

When we talk about a \$650 billion tax increase in January this year on the rich, that passed. That went through. That will be \$65 billion a year in extra revenue. I am saying to you that the Congressional Budget Office tells us that in 10 years from now, we will be paying \$800 billion a year in interest. You are not going to tax the rich out of that. It is just not going to happen.

We are at a point where the debate today and the last week in the Budget Committee has put us in a position to confront the choices we have. Forgive me if I am passionate about this. We have waited 4 years to even see a budget brought to the floor when the law of the United States of America says a budget should be brought every year to the floor and every year before the committee and the President is required to produce a budget every year. For the first time since the Budget Act has been passed, the President has not produced a budget this year. But the Senate has begun to act, so I guess we are supposed to be happy for that. And I am happy for that, but I think we would be a lot better off, the country would be a lot better off—we may be in a better position to reach some sort of compromise on some of the great issues had we been publicly wrestling with these issues for the last 4 years instead of sweeping them under the table.

I suggest the absence of a quorum. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam 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

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam 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.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I rise today to celebrate Women's History Month. This March, we pay tribute to the generations of women in

America whose commitment to their community, their State, and their Nation has proved invaluable to society. I know Kentuckians are proud this March to honor the more than 2.2 million women who live in the Commonwealth.

Women's History Month began as a national celebration in 1981 thanks to an act of Congress, and since 1995 every President has issued an annual proclamation designating March as Women's History Month. For Women's History Month 2013, I would like to shine the spotlight on some very admirable women's groups in Kentucky who are working hard to make the Bluegrass State a better place for women to live, grow, and prosper—and making history themselves.

The Family Scholar House in Louisville is an organization that strives to end the cycle of poverty for many women by giving students who are single parents the support they need to earn a 4-year college degree. By working from poverty to self-sufficiency, these parent-students are then able to provide their children with a better life. The Family Scholar House is transforming families and communities through the power of education, and I had the pleasure of meeting with some of this organization's leaders in my Capitol office last week.

The Chrysalis House, in Lexington, provides substance-abuse treatment programs for women. Their mission is to support women and their families in recovery from alcohol and drugs. In operation for over 34 years, Chrysalis House specializes in treating substance-dependent expecting mothers, allowing them to keep their newborn babies with them while in treatment. They also counsel the children of these women on substance abuse prevention. Chrysalis uses a combination of the 12-step program, long-term living arrangements, and a caring and nurturing environment to ensure women and their families live fulfilling lives free of abusive substances. I have visited Chrysalis House and seen firsthand how much good they are doing, and I want to especially recognize president Lindy Karns and her husband, Rick Christman, for their dedicated efforts.

The Hope Center, also located in Lexington, is an organization that addresses homelessness on multiple fronts. They provide food, shelter, and clothing to the homeless; recovery for those who are addicted; health services for the mentally ill; employment services for those looking for work; housing for those who need it; and childcare and higher education opportunities for single-parent families. The Hope Center seeks to identify the underlying causes that compel people to seek out their services and then work to address them in fundamental ways.

The Isaiah House, located in the town of Willisburg in Washington County, seeks to provide real hope for those who suffer from addiction. This

faith-based program helps men but also has special facilities and programs for women. They exist to help provide women struggling with drug or alcohol addiction the peace and serenity they have been searching for, through counseling that tends to the spiritual, mental, and physical needs of the residents.

Then we have the Western Kentucky University Sisterhood. Western Kentucky University, located in Bowling Green, is one of the Commonwealth's leading universities, and with women making up 65 percent of the school's current students and half of all alumni, the WKU Sisterhood is a way for women to make an impact at the university. The WKU Sisterhood is a group of women who donate at least \$1,000 each and then decide collectively how that money shall be used. Two grant recipients, the groups Women in Transition and Project CLASS, are both programs specifically geared to help women succeed in college.

The New Opportunity School for Women, located in the town of Berea, was founded to improve the educational, financial, and personal circumstances of low-income, middle-aged women in the Appalachian region of Kentucky. In the past 23 years, the New Opportunity School for Women has hosted more than 580 women in its 3-week residential program and provided hundreds more with career and educational outreach and counseling.

What a marvel it is to consider all of the resources, programs, and charities that have been founded in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, by women, for women, to empower women to improve their own lives and then, in turn, improve their communities. Kentucky is truly blessed to have so many people of compassion.

This Women's History Month is an entirely appropriate occasion on which to pay tribute to them and their accomplishments on this floor. I know my colleagues in the U.S. Senate join me in congratulating the leaders and supporters of the several groups I have enumerated here, as well as the many others I did not get to mention, for their good works. And the people of Kentucky thank them as well. History will remember them for their dedication and achievements.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO SUSAN SMIT

• Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Madam President, today I wish to honor a leader who has tirelessly fought to educate young people in my State. After 9 years of dedicated service as superintendent of the Wagner Community School District, Susan Smit will retire at the end of the school year.

Susan Smit's career in education has spanned a period of over 30 years. She embarked on this path in 1970, first as a vocational home economics teacher.

Throughout her time in the field of education, she has held many positions: teacher, counselor, principal and superintendent. Most recently, Susan has spent the last 16 years serving in public schools in Indian Country, working to close the achievement gap between Native and non-Native students. Students in the Wagner Community School District face a unique set of challenges, and Susan Smit's approach to addressing them has been nothing short of visionary. The nature of the district is rural and low income, with over 70 percent of students qualifying for free and reduced meals.

As a founder and cochair of the Senate Impact Aid Coalition, I have enjoyed working with Susan over the years. In November 2012, Susan was invited to speak to congressional offices about the importance of continued Federal investments in education. Susan provided testimony to more than 80 congressional staff members and dozens of education leaders on the negative effect of education funding cuts and the need to maintain funding for critical education programs. During the 2013 annual conference for the National Association of Federally Impacted Schools, NAFIS, Susan was awarded the Friends of NAFIS award, one of the highest honors the organization bestows upon an educator. The honor recognized Susan for her aptitude for problem-solving and her ability to integrate the needs of the Wagner community into school initiatives.

As a superintendent, Susan has strived to broaden access to academic opportunities for youth by maximizing the use of technology in the classroom. The school district's one-to-one laptop initiative provides students with a laptop for their 4 years of high school. This program has increased retention and gives students the opportunity to hone computer skills that will serve them well beyond graduation. Students apply these skills to further their education through online classes. Although the school district does not have the resources to offer traditional advanced placement classes, this does not prevent students from enrolling in these advanced and rigorous courses. Advanced placement classes are offered online though the distance education lab.

One of the crowning achievements of Susan's tenure as superintendent is the implementation of Jobs for America's Graduates, JAG, Program in South Dakota. Through leadership development and mentorship, the program prepares at-risk students for success in college and future careers. Due in part to the program, the school district's graduation rate is above the state average, and the high school has been recognized as a distinguished school under the title I program.

Susan has been a tireless champion for expanding access to quality and affordable early education. As superintendent, Susan spearheaded the creation of a preschool program that is in