

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