

is a tax. Let's call it what it is. It is going to impose an incredible cost on our economy, not to be borne by corporate America; it will be passed on to the American consumers. If the MIT study that was done a year ago is right, there will be \$3,128 per household in this country to comply with the additional costs that will be imposed as a result of this new cap-and-trade proposal included in the President's budget.

It assumes some \$600 billion for health care reform. We have not seen specifics and details about that, but we are concerned as well about the direction in which that may be headed. There are lots of reasons to be opposed to this budget. There are lots of things we could and should be doing to get this economy growing again, but clearly, raising taxes, spending more money here in Washington, DC, borrowing more from our children and grandchildren is not the way to go about this.

I wish I could say I was presenting the worst-case scenario. The numbers we are seeing here are probably optimistic. I think the President's economic assumptions with respect to inflation, unemployment, GDP growth, and all those sorts of things are overly optimistic. I think they have dramatically understated, as I said, the cost of the cap-and-trade proposal. They have understated savings that will be achieved by reductions in our military spending as a result of drawdowns in Iraq. I don't think that is going to be nearly what they assume it is going to be. I think the actual deficits and debt that are going to come as a result of this budget proposal that the President is putting in front of us is going to be way beyond anything we are even contemplating now.

I have to say, what we are contemplating now is way beyond anything we have seen throughout our Nation's history. It is not fair to future generations for us to be saddling them with this enormous amount of debt. As I have pointed out before on the floor, we have had a tradition in this country of one generation sacrificing for another; one generation going without things so that future generations can have a better life. We have turned that ethic completely on its head with this budget by the amount of borrowing and spending that we are doing and in the amount of taxing. We are taking from future generations and asking them to sacrifice so we can have a better life today because we have not been willing or able to live within our means.

It is high time that Congress started taking the steps necessary to get this budget under control, to not buy into the spending spree. Since we have been here—and it has been a little over 50 days in this new Congress and the new administration—the level of spending is now at \$1.2 trillion—\$24 billion a day or \$1 billion an hour that we have spent already—and that is before we even get to this fiscal year 2010 budget, which

includes historic levels of spending, historic levels of taxation, the largest tax increase in American history, and historic levels of borrowing that asks future generations to make sacrifices which are not fair to ask of them.

It is our responsibility to live within our means. We can do that. We can put policies in place that will be additive in terms of creating jobs and growing our economy and making our country stronger. Going down this path is not going to do that. I hope as we debate this in the next couple of weeks that it will become clear to the American people who is standing up for the American taxpayer and what the costs are—the actual costs—that we are asking not only them to bear but asking their children and grandchildren to bear.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of Colorado). Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MERKLEY. 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.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY 2009

Mr. DURBIN. Well, Mr. President, it is St. Patrick's Day, and you might notice a lot of green ties on the floor of the Senate. I notice the Presiding Officer has a nice one on.

I wish to just say for a moment how proud I am to have a grandmother, who passed away, named Mary Margaret Gaul, who was always proud of her Irish heritage and convinced us as kids that is where God would hang out, that great Republic of Ireland. It meant a lot to us growing up as kids to celebrate St. Patrick's Day with my grandmother and to try to continue that tradition in our own time.

But it goes beyond just family connections. It is almost impossible to overstate the importance of Ireland's contributions to America. From our earliest days as a nation, Ireland and America have been united by unbreakable bonds of friendship, family, and a shared commitment to liberty and freedom.

There is a great quote from George Washington, who once said:

When our friendless standard was first unfurled for resistance, who were the strangers who first mustered around our staff? And when it reeled in the fight, who more bravely sustained it than Erin's generous sons?

In the more than two centuries since then, America has been enriched immeasurably by the contributions of the Irish, and Irish Americans, in every field and every walk of life.

And the contributions go both ways.

It just was not the "sons of Erin" who stood and fought on our side with George Washington in the Revolution, it was a son of America, Brooklyn-born Eamonn deValera, who, in 1921, became the first President of a free Ireland.

And it was another son of Irish America, former Senate majority leader George Mitchell, who helped broker the Good Friday Peace Accord nearly 11 years ago.

That hard-won historic agreement laid out a path to end more than 30 years of sectarian bloodshed in Northern Ireland and create a new province, a new government, and a new dream.

For more than a decade, the Good Friday agreement has inspired people around the world to believe it is possible to resolve old hatreds, it is possible to heal old wounds.

To paraphrase the great Irish poet and Nobel laureate, Seamus Heaney, it is possible—with courage and diplomacy—for cooperation to replace confrontation and hope to triumph over history.

We have been horrified in recent days by the reprehensible murders in Northern Ireland of two unarmed British soldiers and a police constable. The two soldiers were days away from being dispatched to Afghanistan. They were the first British soldiers killed in Northern Ireland since that Good Friday agreement. The police constable's death was the first terrorist killing of a member of Northern Ireland's new, carefully balanced police force. The police force was created a couple years ago, and it is an important symbol of political reconciliation.

Their deaths appear to be the work of isolated extremists who have no place and no support in Northern Ireland today.

If it is possible for any good to come from these despicable acts, it is in the reactions of people in Northern Ireland. In the wake of the killings, we have seen a renewed commitment to peace and reconciliation. Former enemies on both sides of "the Troubles" have condemned the killings and vowed not to retaliate with violence.

Martin McGuinness, Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland's power-sharing Government and leader of Sinn Féin, the political wing of the IRA, called the perpetrators of these killings: "traitors to the island of Ireland."

Leaders of Northern Ireland's two largest loyalist paramilitary groups—the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Defence Association—have also condemned the killings and vowed that they will not return to violence.

Most poignantly, we have seen the commitment to peace in the resolve of thousands of ordinary people in Northern Ireland.