more than 200,000 vehicles owned and leased by the U.S. Government. GSA's purchasing divisions have broad effect on the rest of the economy since, as an early acquirer of new technologies, including green technologies, the agency has helped and will continue to help spur production that brings down costs and makes these technologies available and affordable to the broader consumer market. GSA is that important, that it can help build a market for an innovative transformational technology.

In fact, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, commonly known as the Stimulus Act, which we adopted last year, gave GSA specific responsibility to help green the Federal Government by providing $5 billion to make Federal buildings more energy efficient and $300 million to buy more fuel-efficient vehicles for the Federal fleet.

GSA also has wide responsibilities for providing information technology and telecommunications services for Federal agencies. With its leadership, GSA can ensure that the Federal Government is using cutting-edge technology to lower costs, better engage with citizens and detect and defend against cyber threats. In other words, GSA spends so much money every year acquiring information technology systems that if it requires the providers to put together systems that are resistant and defensive to the kinds of cyber attacks that, unfortunately, public and private information networks are under today, it can drive that technology development, which then will be more broadly available to the private sector as it acquires information technology equipment.

A lot of big and important responsibilities are there, meaning the agency is in need of strong leadership. If confirmed, Ms. Johnson will face many challenges, and I wish to take a moment to lay out for my colleagues a few which have come to the attention of our committee, which has oversight of GSA. In the area of procurement, contracts negotiated by GSA must leverage the vast buying power of the Federal Government so agencies get more value for the taxpayers' dollar. Last year, Federal agencies bought approximately $53 billion of goods and services right off GSA schedules and other GSA contracts, which offer everything from office supplies to human resource services, to security equipment, to energy management services and through other contracts negotiated by GSA. Having GSA negotiate these procurement agreements lets these customer agencies stay focused on their core missions. In other words, the agencies do not have to get into all the back-and-forth details on negotiating these contracts. The experts at GSA do it for them. The agencies can focus on what they are supposed to be doing.

Some agencies, if I may speak directly, have lost confidence of the ability of GSA to provide the best products at the best prices and have begun to negotiate their own contracts or interagency contracts. This duplicates services offered by GSA. It is effectively a waste of Federal money and effectively also defeats the purpose of GSA, which was created by President Harry S. Truman, in 1949, with the specific intent of streamlining the Federal Government's purchasing process so every agency of the Federal Government did not have its own separate purchasing division that may have done well or not so well but certainly not as efficiently as one for the whole Federal Government.

The second problem, similar to this one, exists in GSA's property management activities, with agencies sometimes questioning whether GSA has now met their needs in the most cost-effective manner.

Another problem a new administrator must address is the amount of excess or underutilized property owned by the Federal Government. The Office of Management and Budget has reported—these are stunning numbers—that the Federal Government owns 21,000 buildings, worth about $18 billion, that are underused or no longer needed, but they are sitting there. In effect, the GAO, the Government Accountability Office, has put the management of Federal property on their high-risk list for this reason. Not all those properties are under GSA's control, but one of its jobs is to help other agencies dispose of excess property. That is another reason why we need a full-time administrator there.

Think about it, $18 billion. The freeze the President has announced—which I support—doesn't come to much more than that, when you think about the potential for selling some of this property and bringing more revenue to the government.

Let me come back to Martha Johnson. This is a job with big challenges, as I have described, in part. She brings a tremendous wealth of experience in the private, nonprofit, and government sectors. She has a B.A. in economics and history from Oberlin College and a masters in business from Yale Business School. After graduating from Yale, Ms. Johnson began her career in the private sector at Cummins Engines Company. She had a series of other management positions in the private sector and then was called on by the Clinton administration to be the Associate Deputy Secretary of Commerce and then, as I mentioned earlier, Chief of Staff of GSA from 1996 to 2001—very relevant and indispensable experience.

After leaving government, Ms. Johnson was a vice president for the Council for Excellence in Government, which is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing the effectiveness of government at all levels, and most recently she has served as vice president at Computer Sciences Corporation. She is extremely well qualified, has broad qualifications, including extensive experience at GSA.

All these varied experiences make Martha Johnson a perfect fit for the responsibilities and challenges she will face as GSA Administrator. The fact is, she, Martha Johnson, has had broad bipartisan support. I urge my colleagues to vote yes on cloture. I even preserve the hope that there may be a decision to vitiate the cloture vote, that we go right to a final vote, and we confirm this excellent nominee so she can go to work for the American people.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE BUDGET

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, during the past few weeks, President Obama has repeatedly professed a commitment to clamp down on out-of-control spending and on deficits. That new development, of course, appeals to many Americans who have become increasingly frustrated with the trillions of dollars in new debt that has been racked up by this administration.

The President's newly released budget tells a different story, and it is not one of fiscal responsibility. Just look at the front-page headlines from many of today's morning newspapers and you will see a helpful review of what they think of the budget.

The Wall Street Journal: ''U.S. Deficit to Hit All-Time High.''

The Washington Post: ''White House Expects the Deficit to Approach a Record $1.6 Trillion This Year.''

The Washington Times: ''White House Says the Government Will Run Huge Deficits for the Foreseeable Future.''

The publication Politico: ''Five Years, $5.08 Trillion in Debt.''

In other words, this $3.8-trillion budget is another sea of red ink, more of the same record spending and debt that have come to characterize this administration.

Let me go over some important numbers. Under the President's budget, the deficit, which is the gap between total revenues and total spending in a given year, will reach a whopping $1.56 trillion for the fiscal year 2010. For fiscal year 2011, the deficit is projected to be $1.3 trillion. That will mark the third year in a row of trillion-dollar-plus deficits, beginning in 2009. These 3 years of deficits are more than the total accumulated debt from George Washington to George W. Bush. The President's budget also virtually doubles the debt held by the public over 5 years and virtually triples it over 10. It exceeds 60 percent of the GDP as a share of the economy this year. That surpasses last year's 50-year high.

Interest payments will more than quadruple by the end of the decade, reaching $840 billion in the year 2020. That is $311 billion more than we spend on education, roads, and all other nonsecurity discretionary spending. That is just to pay the interest on the debt.

Overall spending will remain well above the historical average as a percentage of GDP. By the end of the 10-year budget window, debt will consume 77.2 percent of our economy. As Congressman PAUL RYAN, ranking member on the House Committee on the Budget, pointed out recently, even European Union countries—hardly exemplars of fiscal rectitude—are required to keep their debt levels below 60 percent of their GDP.

I wish to mention a finding from a new paper entitled ''Growth in a Time of Debt'' by two economists, Kenneth Rogoff of Harvard and Carmen Reinhart of the University of Maryland. In their paper, they study the relationship between GDP growth and debt, and they find that nations carrying an excessively large debt burden of more than 60 percent of GDP produce a negative effect on short-term economic growth. They write:

> When gross external debt reaches 60 percent of GDP, annual growth declines by about 2 percent. For levels of external debt in excess of 90 percent of GDP, growth rates are roughly cut in half.

This only makes sense because you have less money to spend on those things which provide capital, which provide growth in your economy, because you are paying more and more of your income to service the debt.

Remember, our debt will consume 77.2 percent of our economy by 2019. This is important because there are really only four ways to pay down or pay off your debt. The first is to raise taxes. You do not do that when you are in the middle of a recession, and, in fact, it is counterproductive to economic growth in the first place. Second, you cut spending. Well, that is very hard for Congress to do. Third, inflate the currency. Of course, that wipes out savings. It is the least good of the bad alternatives. Fourth, you can grow your way out. Growing your way out is the way to do it, obviously. It is like your family: If you have a lot of debt, you can cut some on spending, sometimes you can make a little more money. You cannot inflate your way out the way the government can. But the preferred way is to grow your way out of debt by, over time, making more money and by being able to pay it down. But there is a point at which, according to these studies, even that does not work—when you have so much debt that you do not have enough money to put back into the system to create the growth we are talking about. And that is what this debt burden and interest cost does.

The administration has been touting a spending freeze worth about $250 billion over a decade to help allay concerns about spending and debt, but it does not start until next October. Therefore, to me, it is a little bit like the alcoholic who says: Well, I am going to quit drinking right after I have my next drink. If it is a good idea—and it is—we should begin now. I applaud any move toward fiscal responsibility, but this proposal will really do little to seriously attack the debt and will not even erase the massive debt accumulated during President Obama's first year in office. As columnist Robert Samuelson put it recently, ''Any savings would be mostly a rounding error in the decade's projected deficits.''

The point is, we have to do a lot more than this. Let's remember that the proposed spending freeze only applies to 17 percent of the budget. Programs targeted for the freeze have already seen a 22-percent increase in their annual appropriations in the past 2 years, plus another 25 percent increase including the stimulus. So it is hard to argue that tough choices are being made when you increase these programs by 22 percent, plus another 25 percent, and then say: OK, now I am going to stop.

Finally, of course, why propose a budget in February with a more than $1.5 trillion deficit and a spending freeze that will not even take effect until October? Maybe another analogy is, it is like the dieter who wants to start the diet tomorrow but never today. The spending freeze is a good idea. So let's not start it in the future, let's start it with this year's appropriations bills.

I would also suggest other stronger measures right now. We can start with the TARP money, for example. Rather than using the TARP money to pay for another stimulus bill, as some of my colleagues have suggested, let's use it to pay down the debt. That money, remember, was borrowed in the first place. We did not have $700 billion lying around. We went to the markets to borrow that, and we have to pay interest on it. A lot of it came from China. We have to pay it back. Let's do that—pay the money back. Do not use it to pay for yet another stimulus program. Remember, it will ultimately have to be paid back.

Second, let's end unlimited funding for government-sponsored enterprises such as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Right now these two entities can spend as much as they like even without congressional authority. I find it interesting that when the President, in his State of the Union speech, said we are going to impose a tax on the banks, he was talking about banks that either never took TARP money or banks that have paid it back. The tax does not apply to Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac. They haven't paid back the money. It does not apply to AIG. It does not apply to General Motors. None of them have paid the money back.

If we are going to have a tax, impose it on those who haven't paid the money back. Don't put it on those who either never needed the money or didn't take it, but, in any event, who have paid it back.

Third, let's rescind unobligated stimulus money. The stimulus has already proven, by most accounts, to be a failure in terms of creating jobs for the money spent. That is even using the administration's own standards to measure its success. Let's use the money that has not yet been spent or obligated to pay down the debt. Again, remember, most of that money has to be borrowed and, therefore, let's not spend it in the first place, thus reducing future debt included in the President's budget.

These are just three specific ways, three relatively easy ways that we could employ to start getting hold of spending and debt. I would also like to suggest that those who continue to evoke the spending policies of the last administration become more focused on the future. That is what Americans want us to do. It makes little sense to complain about high spending from a previous era and then make the situation worse, creating a deficit that is four times as much as the biggest deficit in the previous administration and creating a debt burden that is equal to all of the Presidents from George Washington through George Bush.

Americans want this administration to confront the massive spending and massive debt it is accumulating in a meaningful way. The budget the President sent to Capitol Hill this morning does not do the job.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is now closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF M. PATRICIA SMITH TO BE SOLICITOR FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of M. Patricia Smith, of New York, to be Solicitor for the Department of Labor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, at 5:30 today, under a previous order, the Senate will be voting on cloture on the nomination of Patricia Smith to be Solicitor for the Department of Labor. I