

The statement is clear. This is a crisis. We need to act before we reach the statutory debt limit. So what are we waiting for? Let's act now. Let's not move to other cats and dogs bills that may be positive legislation but can certainly wait. Let's move to the people's business. Let's move to the absolute top challenge we face domestically. Let's come together and debate, vote on, and hopefully begin to solve this problem of unsustainable spending and debt.

To do that we also need leadership, ideas, suggestions. I believe we have provided that on this side of the aisle, and we would welcome ideas, suggestions, and concrete proposals from all Members.

Let me list the more than two dozen pieces of legislation that go directly to this issue:

S. 14, by Senator ENSIGN, establishes a commission on congressional budgetary accountability and review of Federal agencies.

S. 81 is an Isakson bill to direct unused appropriations for Senate official personnel and office expenses to be deposited in the Treasury and actually used to reduce the Federal debt.

S. 102 is a McCain bill which requires OMB to transmit to Congress a message with specified information requesting any recession the President proposes under the procedures instituted under that act.

S. 162 is a Paul bill to cut \$500 billion in Federal spending from fiscal year 2011.

S. 163, by Senator TOOMEY, is the Full Faith and Credit Act to prioritize principle and interest payments when and if the debt limit is reached.

S. 178, by Senator DEMINT, reduces Federal spending by \$2.5 trillion through fiscal year 2021.

S. 245 is a Corker bill, the CAP Act, to create a discretionary spending cap for Congress.

S. 259 is my bill to prioritize Social Security payments if and when the debt limit is reached.

S. 360, by Senator INHOFE, creates a point of order to exceed nonsecurity discretionary limits and to create spending limits for fiscal years 2017 to 2021.

S. 389, by Senator KIRK—and Senator HATCH has a similar bill—establishes a commission to review cost control.

S. 391, by Senator MORAN, rescinds all unobligated balances of President Obama's stimulus bill.

S.J. Res. 3, by Senator HATCH, is a balanced budget amendment.

S.J. Res. 4, by Senator SHELBY, is on the same topic.

And S.J. Res. 5, by Senator LEE, is on the same topic.

This is a long list, but it is certainly not exhaustive. I have read a partial list to make the point. We are coming up with ideas, proposals, and solutions. We encourage every Senator of both parties to come up with ideas, proposals, and solutions. Let's actually talk about the greatest threat we face.

Let's talk about it now. Let's debate it now. Let's exchange ideas in a positive atmosphere now, well before we reach any crisis atmosphere over the debt limit.

I respectfully urge the distinguished majority leader, Senator REID, to heed our call to arms, to read our letter and react by creating an identified time on the Senate floor, well before we reach the statutory debt limit, to debate and pass solutions on this crucial topic.

I don't believe there is debate that this isn't the greatest challenge we face, that this isn't the greatest economic threat we face. Quite simply, what are we waiting for? We need time to bring forth these ideas and exchange them and debate them and act. We need time to do this well before the statutory debt limit is reached. We need to do the people's business in a reasonable way, in a sober atmosphere, not in an atmosphere of hysteria or threats when the debt limit would be reached in a matter of days.

I urge all colleagues to join us in this effort, to come to the floor with their ideas, their proposals. Let's do the people's business.

I ask unanimous consent that a partial list of Republican solutions and proposals be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 14—an Ensign bill to establish the Commission on Congressional Budgetary Accountability and Review of Federal Agencies. Directs the President to designate two Commission co-chairpersons.

S. 81—an Isakson bill to direct unused appropriations for Senate Official Personnel and Office Expense Accounts to be deposited in the Treasury and used for deficit reduction or to reduce the Federal debt.

S. 102—a McCain bill which requires OMB to transmit to Congress a message with specified information requesting any recession the President proposes under the procedures established in this Act.

S. 162—a Paul bill to cut \$500 billion in federal spending from FY 2011.

S. 163—Toomey's Full Faith and Credit Act to prioritize principle and interest payments when the debt limit is reached.

S. 178—DeMint bill to reduce federal spending by \$2.5 trillion through 2021.

S. 245—Corker's CAP act to create a discretionary spending cap on Congress.

S. 259—Vitter bill to prioritize Social Security payments when the debt limit is reached.

S. 360—Inhofe bill to create a point of order to exceed non-security discretionary limits; also creates spending limits for FY 2017–2021.

S. 389—Kirk and Hatch bill to establish a commission which will conduct a review of cost control in the federal government every two years with respect to improving management and reducing costs. Directs the Commission to conduct in-depth studies to evaluate potential improvements in the operations of executive agencies and to develop recommendations regarding: (1) opportunities for increased efficiency and reduced costs that can be realized by executive action or legislation, (2) areas where managerial accountability can be enhanced and administrative control can be improved, (3) opportunities for managerial improvements over the short and long terms, (4) specific areas where further study can be justified by

potential savings, and (5) ways to reduce governmental expenditures and indebtedness and improve personnel management.

S. 391—Moran bill which rescinds all unobligated balances of the Obama stimulus bill.

S.J. Res. 3—Hatch's balanced budget amendment.

S.J. Res. 4—Shelby balanced budget amendment.

S.J. Res. 5—Lee balanced budget amendment.

Mr. VITTER. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

ENERGY

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I rise to talk in morning business about the energy issue facing the country. Anyone who has filled up the car or truck in the last month knows we have an energy crisis that is building and needs to be addressed. Last week I filled up my pickup truck. It cost about \$50. Across the Nation, parents are driving in carpools. Farmers, small business owners, and commuters are experiencing sticker shock at the rising cost to put gas in their vehicles. Today oil is over \$104 a barrel. That means on average Americans are paying \$3.52 a gallon. It is going in the upward direction from there. We are clearly in an economic downturn. We have high unemployment. Now is not the time to sit back and do nothing as the price of gasoline goes up at the pump.

In response, the White House is beginning to talk about tapping the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. We know that will not work. The Strategic Petroleum Reserve is available for natural disasters and global disasters. But experience has shown that any gain from releasing oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve is small and temporary, and prices quickly go right back up to their high and rising levels. If we diminish our resources, our reserves in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, we are even more vulnerable to those who would do mischief to the country because they would know we have a diminished supply, or to the natural disasters for which we are supposed to be prepared.

Our problem is, we are the only Nation on Earth that has vast natural resources which we will not use. American energy is out there. It is under our land. It is under our waters. It is ready to be tapped, and it can be tapped environmentally safely. We could bring the prices down on our own accord. We know there is upheaval in the Middle East right now that could affect further the gasoline prices because of potential shortages. We are too dependent on foreign sources for our energy needs. It is a little more than 50 percent. That is not strategically sound, and it is most certainly not in our national security interest to leave us at that level.

The Gulf of Mexico is one of the biggest resources we have. The Gulf of Mexico accounts for nearly 30 percent

of total U.S. oil production and 13 percent of natural gas production. By failing to take full advantage of that resource, we are putting our energy security on the line.

Mr. President, 400,000 jobs across the gulf coast are tied to the offshore energy industry. Nearly a year after issuing its moratorium and months since the moratorium was lifted, the Department of the Interior last week approved its first, its one and only, deepwater permit—one in a year. It's one and one only. There are thousands of idled leases, people sitting in the Gulf of Mexico idle that should be able to be at least exploring to determine if it is worth drilling. Yet the gulf is facing a permitorium.

My constituents know the pain of this "permitorium." One unfortunate case is the Houston-based Seahawk Drilling Company. Seahawk Drilling used to be the second largest shallow water drilling contractor in the United States. It provided high-paying jobs to men and women in Texas and across the Gulf of Mexico. I say "used to" because in February bureaucratic delays in shallow water permitting forced Seahawk Drilling to declare bankruptcy. They could not continue to have the costs associated with their employment levels, and with their company being there without the opportunity to drill and produce and keep their employee base. They declared bankruptcy. It destroyed 1,000 high-paying Texas jobs.

I received a letter describing the pain and distress the company felt when it had to inform the dedicated Seahawk employees they no longer had a job. According to the letter, on the day Seahawk was forced to sell its assets and lay off workers, the chief operating officer had to "fight back the emotions of the day. He took a deep breath and he left the conference room for a room full of Seahawk employees to tell them that their company was bankrupt."

These are real people with real families who lost real jobs—American jobs—and it could have been prevented.

Since the moratorium was enacted, at least 13 rigs—deepwater and shallow water—have departed the Gulf of Mexico, taking with them good American jobs, and, furthermore, putting us in the position of having to import now from the foreign countries where these rigs have gone, not only taking away American jobs but forcing us to be even more dependent on foreign imports for our energy needs.

Offshore energy production is expected to decrease by 13 percent in 2011, due to the slow pace of permitting. This is unacceptable, and we must do something that is productive.

Yesterday, Senator LANDRIEU and I introduced the LEASE Act, the Lease Extension and Secure Energy Act of 2011. All our bill does is extend the offshore leases that are impacted by the moratorium and the lack of permitting for 1 year.

The LEASE Act returns to lessees the lease time taken from them during

the moratorium. This will increase domestic energy production and protect some American jobs—those that have not already left. Despite being unable to explore for energy resources, the leaseholders are continuing to pay the expenses, as time ticks away on their lease.

The LEASE Act will prevent leases from running out, and it gives the lessees the certainty they deserve that they will have the full amount of the lease for which they have paid bonus payments to secure.

In 2009, the industry accounted for \$70 billion in economic value and provided \$20 billion in revenue to Federal, State, and local governments through royalties, bonuses, and tax collections.

I hope our bill will be noncontroversial. It would seem to me that anyone would agree that if you paid for a 10-year lease, and you have the expenses of exploring to see if that lease has potential, before you drill to see if the lease has potential, you would have the full 10 years, and not 9 years because you have not been able to use the year we have had the moratorium and the lack of permitting.

There has been another suggestion by the administration that perhaps we should be proposing energy taxes—up to \$90 billion over the next 10 years. The President suggested that in his State of the Union message. Much of the taxes that would go on the oil and gas industry for expenses—that any industry, any business can write off, but would single out the oil and gas industry not to be able to expense their exploration and drilling costs—what would happen? If the prices go up, of course, who is going to pay those high prices? The families and businesses that are having to fill their cars with gasoline.

In fact, the administration, through the EPA, is trying to bring more expenses to the refining industry by purporting to regulate greenhouse gas emissions. The administration is also adding to the refiners by saying they should not get the manufacturing tax credit.

We have been trying to encourage manufacturing in America because we want manufacturing jobs in America, and so many of those have gone overseas. But the administration proposes to tax refiners who are manufacturing the gasoline from the oil and add more expense to the product, which is gasoline, and, oh, by the way, take away the capability for these refiners to have the same treatment as any other manufacturer in our country.

Raising taxes on our domestic oil and energy industry is wrong, particularly at this time. We need to assure that we are not going to drive our energy jobs overseas. Yet what the administration is doing is counterintuitive if we all agree we want to keep the jobs in America.

So here we are with gas at \$3.52 a gallon, and the summer driving season is upon us. We are looking now at esti-

mates from the experts that gasoline could be \$4 a gallon. What is that going to do to the family who wants to take a vacation at a reasonable price? What is that going to do to the workers who have to get to work and who are already strapped, and, for Heaven's sake, the poor people who are unemployed who are trying to go and interview for jobs with gas at \$4 a gallon?

We cannot sit here and let this happen. It is time we get together with the President of the United States and have proactive energy ideas, programs, and solutions that are going to keep jobs in America, that will allow us to use our natural resources to begin to set the stage if we have upheaval in the Middle East that causes the supply to go down at a great rate. We need to have our supply go up to meet the test we should have of lowering energy prices for our people with our own natural resources. It is not to put the SPR out and put us in an even more vulnerable position. No. It is to use our resources, with Americans to take the jobs, and increase our supply so the price of gasoline at the pump goes down for the American people, and so we can have the jobs we should have in America stay in America.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

HARRIET TUBMAN

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, 12 years ago this very day, the Senate passed a joint resolution that honored Harriet Tubman, with Harriet Tubman Day, on March 10. That resolution was sponsored by Senator CARPER and then-Senator BIDEN. In the House of Representatives, I served and I cosponsored a similar resolution.

Harriet Tubman was a remarkable woman. She was born in Dorchester County, MD, in 1822. She was a slave for greater than 25 years of her life. At age 25, she married John Tubman. She escaped slavery in 1849. She returned to the eastern shore of Maryland, not once but 19 times that we know of within a 10-year period, in order to rescue slaves and to set them free.

She rescued slaves in Dorchester County and Caroline County in Maryland and throughout the entire Northeast. She was known as the modern day "Moses" for the Underground Railroad.

In the Civil War, she joined Union forces as a spy, as a scout, and as a nurse, operating in Virginia, Florida, and South Carolina.

After the Civil War was over, she settled in Auburn, NY, and was very actively involved in the women's suffrage movement, and she established one of the first African-American homes for the aged.

She died in 1913.

Harriet Tubman embodies the American spirit. She was a strong-willed person who fought for the rights and freedom of those who were oppressed in the barbaric institution of slavery.