

bills, but when the Congress fails to act on them through regular order, we wind up with a \$1 trillion omnibus bill or a \$1 trillion continuing resolution that cedes the power of the purse to the executive branch.

Neither the most liberal nor the most conservative Member of this body should prefer an omnibus or a CR over the regular order in our budget process.

Several weeks ago, I had the opportunity to sit down with the new chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, Congressman Hal Rogers of Kentucky, to congratulate him on his new position.

During our discussion, we both agreed that the Congress needs to reestablish regular order in the appropriations process. Both Chambers need to pass its bills and allow us to work out our differences in conference.

I believe if we adopt this approach, we can do our part to help this Nation regain its economic health.

The first step in the process is the adoption of a budget to provide the framework for appropriations bills. The House must step up to the plate with a budget that is workable. It cannot hide behind vague rhetoric and arbitrary spending caps, and it should not insist upon irrational, problematic cuts that would devastate the lives of the American people. Likewise, it is imperative that the Senate do its part in moving a budget through a responsible and regular order process, including the timely adoption of a budget resolution. If a budget resolution is not adopted by early May, the appropriations process will be delayed. Every week of delay further diminishes our ability to finish our work prior to the end of the fiscal year.

In recent years, all too often appropriations bills have been held hostage, as Members offered message amendments, knowing they would not pass, while the time needed to complete 12 freestanding bills slipped away. By September, we had abandoned any hope of finishing all 12 bills as the calendar simply did not give us enough time.

We Democrats must recognize that regular order cannot exist without bipartisan cooperation. Last year, despite the lack of a budget resolution, the committee completed almost all of its work, preparing 11 of the 12 appropriations bills for full consideration in a timely manner. However, gridlock on the Senate floor eliminated any further progress.

If a more open amendment process for relevant amendments will enable these bills to move forward, we should be open to such an approach even if that means taking some uncomfortable votes. This Chamber is split 53 to 47. Both sides need to give a little bit, and in so doing, it is my hope that we can get the bipartisan appropriations process back on track.

Certainly, no Member of this body wants to explain to his or her constituents why we have failed yet again to responsibly fund the government or

ceded our constitutional authority to the administration or even why we are unable to work together responsibly to avoid a disastrous government shutdown. We must find a way to accomplish the tasks the Constitution has assigned to us. To do this, we need a budget resolution, we need the House to send over appropriations bills in a timely fashion, we need floor time, and we need a willingness to vote on amendments. Without these four things, there is no doubt in my mind that I will be standing in this Chamber in late September, yet again, seeking passage of a continuing resolution in order to avoid shutting down the government.

The House and the Senate need to find a way to work together to pass our bills under the regular order and send them to the President. This is the only way we can restore discipline to the budget process. It is the only way we can maintain our constitutional responsibility to determine how taxpayers dollars are spent. It is truly the only way we can avoid repeating the catchall spending bills none of us wants.

I yield the floor, and I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. KLOBUCHAR). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REDUCING THE DEFICIT

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, yesterday the Senate rejected two bills to provide funding for the rest of this fiscal year. I voted against both bills, and I want to explain why and to explain what I believe is the only course open to us if we are to be serious about reducing the budget deficit.

It was a victory for the American people when the Senate voted overwhelmingly to reject the spending bill sent to us by the House. House Republicans who tell us they want to reduce the deficit have proposed a cure that does little to cure our budget disease and does great damage to the patient in the meantime.

The House bill proposed cuts in non-defense discretionary spending, and in that area alone. Simple math suggests that we cannot meaningfully reduce the deficit in this manner. These programs represent less than 15 percent of the total budget. Not surprisingly, then, the Republican proposal would reduce our projected budget deficit this year by only a token amount. As a matter of fact, it would reduce our budget deficit this year by less than 1 percent.

The Republican plan fails the test of seriousness about the deficit, but it would have done significant damage to

programs that Americans depend on. It would have cut more than \$1 billion from Head Start. It would have eliminated early childhood education programs for more than 200,000 American children. It would have cut or eliminated Pell grants for hundreds of thousands of college students. It would have cut \$61 million from the budget request for food inspections, despite the fact that thousands of Americans every year suffer from foodborne illnesses. It would have cut \$1 billion from the Women, Infants and Children Program, weakening a program that helps poor families put food on the table. It would cut \$180 million from the Securities and Exchange Commission budget and more than \$100 million from the Commodity Futures Trading Commission budget. And those are the regulators. Those are the cops we need on the beat to make sure we oversee the financial markets that recently devastated our economy.

It would have cut nearly \$290 million from the Veterans' Administration efforts to provide better service to our veterans.

The House budget would have cut \$1 billion of funding for community health centers, eliminating primary care for millions of Americans.

The proposal of the House of Representatives, which we soundly defeated here yesterday, would have cut \$550 million from National Science Foundation research, another \$1 billion plus from Department of Energy research, and almost \$900 billion from our support for renewable energy sources and energy conservation. All of that would make us even more dependent than we now are on foreign oil.

The Republican proposal from the House would have cut \$2 billion from clean water programs, putting public health at risk, and it would have cut \$250 million from the Great Lakes restoration efforts.

The House proposal would have cut more than \$120 million from the President's request and more than \$350 million from the fiscal 2010 level from border security efforts. That is the very issue—border security—which the Republicans, including the Speaker of the House, have called their No. 1 priority. Yet their budget would have cut more than \$350 million from the 2010 level for border security.

We need to make spending cuts, and I think all of us know that. We have to reduce and remove redundancy and inefficiency in the government, and it exists. The President has proposed cuts. We need to seek more cuts and we need to act. But the cuts the Republicans proposed aren't about increasing efficiency. Their proposal, as Senator MANCHIN pointed out yesterday, blindly hacks at the budget with no sense of our priorities or of our values as a country. So we wisely rejected that path.

We also rejected a second proposal, and I voted against that one as well. I rejected it because while it avoided the

blind hacking at the budget in which the House Republicans engaged, it focused solely on cuts in nondefense discretionary spending. We had two choices yesterday, Draconian cuts or more targeted cuts. But those are not the only two choices available to us. We can choose to seriously address our budget deficit by acknowledging that it cannot be significantly reduced until we understand that increased revenue as well as spending cuts is part of the solution.

How can we raise additional revenue without slowing the economy? We can end the excessive tax cuts for the upper income taxpayers President Bush put in place. We can close tax loopholes that not only drain the Treasury but send American jobs abroad to boot.

The cost of the government to continue that upper bracket income tax cut President Bush was able to obtain is about \$30 billion a year. Ending that \$30 billion tax cut, which goes to roughly 2 percent of Americans at the very top—those earning more than \$200,000—could allow us to avoid the drastic cuts in important programs I have mentioned, and much more besides.

Increasing revenue makes sense not only from a deficit reduction perspective, it is also fair. Those at the top, incomewise, have done very well as a group in recent decades, while incomes for most Americans have stagnated. To be specific, the top 1 percent of all income earners has more than doubled their share of total U.S. income in the last few decades—from 8.2 percent in 1980 to 17.7 percent in 2008. Meanwhile, median household income—the income of the typical American family—is now 5 percent lower than it was in the late 1990s. To eliminate programs that are critically important to working families while maintaining tax cuts for those whose incomes have soared would be a grave injustice.

There are also other revenues we could look to if we are truly serious about deficit reduction. There are a number of tax loopholes we can close. For example, we should not continue to give corporations a tax deduction when they send American jobs overseas. We should not allow corporations and wealthy individuals to avoid U.S. taxes by hiding assets and income in offshore tax havens. We should not allow hedge fund managers to earn enormous incomes and yet pay a lower tax rate than their secretaries pay.

The American people are looking to us. They are concerned about the size of the deficit and the effect it might have on future generations. But they also reject the notion that Draconian cuts—cuts that fall hardest on working families—are the answer. They see the wisdom and the fairness in making sure all Americans share in the sacrifices that will be required as we seek to reduce our deficit.

We have an opportunity now to show the American people that we understand too. We can craft a plan now that

preserves vital programs, that makes prioritized and necessary cuts in spending, but also a plan that recognizes the need for comprehensive approaches that address revenue as well as spending. In the coming days, we need to adopt such a comprehensive approach.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

Mr. FRANKEN. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. FRANKEN pertaining to the introduction of S. 555 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FRANKEN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

SBIR/STTR REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2011—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 17, S. 493.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 17, (S. 493), a bill to reauthorize and improve the SBIR and STTR programs, and for other purposes.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. I have a cloture motion at the desk. I ask that it be reported.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 17, S. 493, a bill to reauthorize and improve the SBIR and STTR programs, and for other purposes.

Harry Reid, Mary L. Landrieu, Benjamin L. Cardin, Charles E. Schumer, Daniel K. Inouye, Joseph I. Lieberman, Bernard Sanders, Debbie Stabenow, Patrick J. Leahy, Tom Harkin, Kay R. Hagan, Michael F. Bennet, Al Franken, Herb Kohl, Sheldon Whitehouse, Thomas R. Carper, Richard J. Durbin.

Mr. REID. I now ask unanimous consent that the cloture vote occur immediately

following the Senate's action in executive session on Monday, March 14; further, that the mandatory quorum call under rule XXII be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. I now withdraw my motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am disappointed that I had to file cloture on a bill as important as this one. We were going to have a new day in the Senate. I think it is really too bad. This is the small business innovation bill, and everyone knows we have had an open amendment process. People can offer amendments on anything they want. I think this is suggestive of maybe something I do not understand.

Why wouldn't my Republican colleagues want us to move to a small business bill to help create jobs? We are told that 85 percent of all jobs in America are small business jobs. Should we not be trying to help them? That is what we have been working on. We have not been doing all of these things, these "messages," cutting out programs for little boys and girls who want to learn to read, cutting Pell grants for young men and women who are in college, cutting the ability of renewable energy projects to go forward, and all of these other messages they are sending the American people. We are trying to create jobs.

We have spent this Congress, over here in the Senate, on bipartisan issues creating jobs: FAA, 280,000 jobs. We just finished, within the last few hours, the bill that will change the patent system in this country. That has needed changing for 60 years, and we have done that.

Now they are blocking our going to a small business bill, another bipartisan bill. Senator SNOWE, the ranking member of that committee, has worked with Senator LANDRIEU to move this bill forward. Who is holding up our going to this very important jobs bill? I hope the Republicans in the House are understanding what we are doing over here, creating jobs.

With those two bills I have just mentioned, the patent bill and the bill dealing with the Federal Aviation Administration, that is 580,000 jobs. So I am very disappointed I had to file cloture on proceeding to a small business jobs bill.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. 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.

ETHANOL SUBSIDIES AND TARIFFS

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I have introduced legislation, with my