

What is extreme is the thought that government can continue on this reckless path without consequence. What is extreme is thinking we can blithely watch the Nation's debt get bigger and bigger and pretend it doesn't matter. What is extreme is spending more than \$1.5 trillion than we have in a single year. This is the Democrats' approach. That is what is extreme.

The sad truth is, as our fiscal problems have become deeper, Democrats in Washington and many others in statehouses across the country have become increasingly less concerned about the consequences. Look no farther than the ongoing spending debate in which Democrats have fought tooth and nail over a proposal to cut a few billion dollars at a time when we are borrowing about \$4 billion a day and our national debt stands at \$14 trillion; the President has set the debate out entirely; and Democrats have the nerve to call anyone who expresses concern an extremist. If you are wondering where the tea party came from, look no further than that.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the first hour equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first 30 minutes and the Republicans controlling the next 30 minutes.

The Senator from Washington is recognized.

#### TESORO TRAGEDY ANNIVERSARY

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor this morning to mark the 1-year anniversary of a terrible tragedy in my home State of Washington, and to once again honor the memories of those who were killed.

On April 2, 2010, a fire broke out at the Tesoro refinery in Anacortes, WA, and claimed the lives of seven workers: Daniel J. Aldridge, Matthew C. Bowen, Donna Van Dreumel, Matt Gumbel, Darrin J. Hoines, Lew Janz, and Kathryn Powell.

These were men and women who were taken too young, with so much life to live and with so many people to live it with. They were workers who took on tough jobs, worked long hours during difficult economic times to provide for their families. They were people who made tremendous sacrifices and who embodied so much of what is good about the community they lived in.

They have been dearly missed. Even now, 1 year later, there is nothing we can say to make the pain go away for the mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, coworkers, and family members who still bear those deep scars of loss. But the Anacortes community is

strong, and while they have endured more than their fair share of pain over the years, their resiliency and compassion have carried them forward. Over the past year, we have seen homes and hearts and pocketbooks open to the families who lost so much because this community understands the pain of a loss such as this can't be overcome or forgotten. They know these families should never have to bear that pain alone.

We owe it to the Anacortes community to honor those they have lost. We owe it to them to do everything we can to make sure that such tragedies never happen again.

State investigators have determined that tragedy could have been and should have been prevented. The problems that led to what happened were known beforehand and they should have been fixed. That is heartbreaking.

Every worker in every industry deserves to be confident that while they are working hard and doing their jobs, their employers are doing everything they can to protect them. I want you to know I will keep working to make sure the oil and gas industry improves their safety practices, because we owe that to our workers and to their families and to communities such as Anacortes all across our country.

One year after that tragedy, my thoughts and prayers and condolences remain with the families who have endured so much pain, and my profound thanks goes out to the Anacortes community that has been with those families every step of the way.

I am proud to submit a Senate resolution with my colleague, Senator CANTWELL—which we will do later today—to recognize the anniversary of this tragedy on April 2, 2011, and I urge my colleagues to join in remembering those workers in Anacortes who were taken from us far too soon.

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

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BENNET. 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.

#### PUBLIC EDUCATION

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I wanted to come to the floor today to talk a little about the state of public education in this country, especially when it comes to the condition of poor children in the United States, in part because I think it is urgent that we fix No Child Left Behind—a law that is not working well for kids and for teachers, and for moms and dads all across the United States, and certainly in my home State of Colorado.

Sometimes people who aren't engaged in the work of teaching our

kids—which I think is the hardest work anybody can do, short of going to war—don't realize how horrific the outcomes are for children in this great country of ours, especially children living in poverty. When I am on this floor, where there are 100 desks—there are 100 Senators—I sometimes think a little about what the condition of the people here would be if they were not Senators, but if these 100 people were poor children living in the United States in the 21st century.

First of all, it is important to recognize that of the 100 Senators—or the 100 kids in this great country—42 of the 100 would be living in poverty. Forty-two out of the 100 would be poor. Of those Senators—now poor children living in this country—as this chart shows, by the age of 4 they would have heard only one-third of the words heard by their more affluent peers. They are living in poverty, and they have heard 13 million words. A child in a professional family has heard 45 million words. There isn't a kindergarten teacher in this country who wouldn't tell you that makes an enormous difference right out of the chute.

Also by age 4, only 39 of the 100 children can recognize the letters of the alphabet—just 39 of 100 by age 4. In contrast, 85 percent of the children coming from middle-class families can recognize the letters of the alphabet. Again, there is not a kindergarten teacher or a high school teacher who wouldn't tell you that makes an enormous difference to kids when they come to school in terms of their readiness to learn.

But what happens when they are actually in our schools? By the fourth grade, only 17 out of 100 children in poverty can read at grade level—17. That is fewer kids than there are desks in this section of the Senate floor. The entire rest of the floor would be kids who cannot read at grade level by the fourth grade. These kids are reading at grade level. Everyone else all across this beautiful Chamber would not be able to read at grade level in America in the 21st century. Only this section can read proficiently by the fourth grade.

What happens as they stay in school? It gets worse. By the eighth grade, only 16 of our kids can read at grade level. I could wander around the entire rest of this Chamber looking for somebody who can read proficiently, and I would not be able to find them. I have been in classrooms all across my State, all across the great city of Denver, and all across this country. In my view, there is nothing more at war with who we are as Americans or who we are as Coloradans than a fifth grade child reading at the first grade level. There is a lot of discussion on this floor about your moral right to this and your moral right to that. I cannot think of anything less American than a child in the fifth grade doing first grade math.

Speaking of math, in a world where technology and engineering and invention are going to dominate the 21st