

administration agrees and grants them waivers?

So this past weekend, Secretary Sebelius added another 128 waivers covering another 300,000 Americans to say: No, for the next year, you get a 1-year waiver, you do not have to live under the mandates of ObamaCare.

So now we are at a point where the total number of waivers granted has been over 1,000, covering 2,930,000 people. So, wow, what is the breakdown of those people? Who are they? How can they get those waivers?

Well, it is interesting. In this country, where union workers are just a small percentage of the total workforce, 49 percent—almost half—of all of the waivers have been granted to people who get their insurance through the unions.

I just looked at this list that came out, and it is interesting because one of the waivers that had been granted for 13,000 employees, enrollees, is for the United Food and Commercial Workers Union. So let's see what we can find out about them. If we go to their Web site and go to the area that deals with health care, what it says is this:

Thanks to your hard work—

This is to people in the union—

Thanks to your hard work over the last year, Congress passed a health care reform bill that was signed into law by President Obama. This landmark reform is a hard-fought victory for [the United Food and Commercial Workers Union]. . . .

Well, wait a second, these are the same people who went in and asked for and got a waiver from the Secretary of Health and Human Services—a waiver so they do not have to live under it.

Now, it is interesting, if you go to this Web site, you can click to other things, and what you can find is that you can actually watch a video on the Web site of the people who just got a waiver—a video of the members of this union “rally and talk about health care reform.” Oh, the health care they are rallying for, but they do not want it to apply to them. The Secretary of Health and Human Services says: That is fine, you can have a waiver. Oh, you can actually “see the pictures of [union] members taking action on health care reform.” But it is not the action of applying for the waiver—a waiver they have just been granted by the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Now it says:

Call your members of Congress to thank them for passing real reform.

Oh, you are supposed to thank the Members of this body for passing something, but then they applied for a waiver that has been granted for over 13,000 members who get insurance through this program?

They say you can also check an area to read the background information on this union’s “advocacy of health care reform”—advocacy for a program they wanted to force down the throats of the American people but yet do not want to live under themselves.

This health care law is bad for this country, it is bad for our patients, it is bad for our health care providers, and it is bad for taxpayers. The union members who absolutely lobbied for it are now saying—now that they have read the bill, now that they know what is in the law, they are saying they do not want it to apply to them, so much so that one of the unions that has gotten a waiver, on their recent Web site, said:

. . . we are . . . challenged by how to implement the law under prevailing circumstances.

Well, the prevailing circumstances are the law they wanted passed.

It says:

The Trustees of the Fund have no ability to secure additional contributions needed to cover the increased costs of providing these required—

Required by the people on the other side of the aisle who voted for this—additional benefits.

It says:

The Trustees are requesting a waiver from HHS to preserve the annual benefit limitation now in place for the part-time plan of benefits to minimize the cost impact of transitioning to the requirements of the reform act. . . .

Well, what it basically says is that these folks who want the waiver are saying what I have been saying on this floor since the beginning of the debate: that this is going to be bad for taxpayers, it is going to drive up the cost of care, it is going to drive up the cost of insurance, in spite of the President’s promise that if we pass this, families will see premiums drop by \$2,100, in spite of the President’s promise that if you like your plan, you can keep it. What we are seeing, for the people who proudly lobbied for this, is that they do not want it to apply to them. They realize now it is going to cause their plans to have significant problems.

I believe every American ought to be able to have a waiver, every American ought to not have to live under this health care law. To me, it is unaffordable, it is unmanageable, and I believe it is unconstitutional. That is why I come to the floor, as I have every week, with a doctor’s second opinion that we must repeal and replace this health care law.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Madam 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.

ENSURING PAY FOR OUR MILITARY ACT

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Madam President, I wish to speak about the urgent fiscal crisis that is facing our Nation. We know the Congress right now is in ne-

gotiation for a resolution that will take us until the end of the fiscal year, and it is in an atmosphere in which so many people are worried about our overwhelming debt and the deficit that would be in the budget that was submitted by the President. We now are trying to cut that budget responsibly.

The United States is averaging \$4 billion a day in debt. A \$1.6 trillion deficit is projected by the end of this year. That is just the deficit. That is adding to the debt. Federal spending in 2010 was 23.8 percent of gross domestic product. The CBO, the Congressional Budget Office, predicts it will be 24.7 percent of GDP in 2011.

As a nation, we must remain competitive by reducing Federal spending and spurring economic growth in the private sector. It is jobs in the private sector that will take our economy out of the doldrums where it is now.

For the sake of the American people, I hope we can come together to stop the reckless Federal spending. Continuing the spending, the borrowing, and the taxing in Washington will halt job creation and triple the debt by the end of this decade. That is what is predicted.

We must make bold cuts where we can by carefully also prioritizing investment in areas of strategic national importance. What we need now is for the President, the Senate majority leader, and the House Speaker to sit in a room and not come out until a deal is made that has the votes to pass.

I do not want a government shutdown. The consequence of a government shutdown will be enormous, and so many people who are talking about that as an option, as if it is not a big deal, just do not realize how many lives it will touch and how hard it is going to make life for so many people—people who have depended on benefits, such as veterans.

We do not know what will happen in a government shutdown. We do not know what will happen to our military because that is not clear. That is what I want to talk about today.

A government shutdown will put people in peril in many areas, but now we have a situation in which our military, our Active-Duty military—almost 90,000 are in Afghanistan, 47,000 in Iraq—is put in a position today of now also wondering if their spouses at home with children are going to get their paychecks. If we have a government shutdown that will affect their ability to pay their mortgages.

Madam President, let me ask, are there time limits in place?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. There is an order to recognize Senator AYOTTE for her first speech at 10:40 a.m.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Thank you, Madam President.

Let me just say that I have introduced legislation. I have cosponsors—CASEY, INHOFE, SNOWE, MURKOWSKI, COLLINS, AYOTTE, and HOEVEN. It is the Ensuring Pay for our Military Act of

2011. It is very simple. It just ensures that in the event of a Federal Government shutdown—which I do not want to happen and do not support—our military will be paid. It also will allow anyone who is serving our military—civilian defense employees or contractors who do the food services—to also be able to go to work and not have to worry about what is going to be happening back home, especially for those who are serving in harsh conditions overseas.

I so hope we will be able to pass this bill. I do not want 1 more minute of stress on our military. The bill is very simple, and it is very short and very clear: Our military personnel and their support will not be affected by a government shutdown.

I hope I can have more colleagues signing up. We have introduced this bill, S. 724, and I hope we can get a vote on this bill in very short order so this is off the table.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Hampshire.

FACING ENORMOUS CHALLENGES

Ms. AYOTTE. Madam President, with humility and a deep sense of reverence for this body, I rise today to address my colleagues in the Senate. Serving in this historic Chamber is truly an honor. On this floor, men and women of strong character gather together to continue the unfinished work of building a more perfect union.

It is an even greater privilege to stand here representing the people of New Hampshire. A place of distinct beauty that places a premium on self-governance and informed public discourse, New Hampshire reflects the very best of our Nation.

As America faces enormous challenges, I am reminded of the words of wisdom from one of New Hampshire's revered statesmen, GEN John Stark. After fighting bravely and heroically in the Revolutionary War, General Stark gave New Hampshire its treasured State motto: "Live Free or Die." This famous quote perfectly captures the spirit and character of the people of the Granite State. Fiercely independent and strongly protective of our personal freedoms, we place a high premium on self-reliance, personal initiative, and individual liberty. We believe strongly that government cannot and should not be allowed to get in the way of each of us reaching our full potential. That is what "live free or die" means. Yet, as I stand here today and as I have heard from so many of my fellow Granite Staters, we are at a time when our government has grown so large and we have become so indebted that the size of our debt threatens the full potential and future of the greatest people and country on Earth.

ADM Mike Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has said that America's debt is the greatest national

security threat we face. That debt now stands at a historic level of over \$14 trillion, about half of which is held by other countries. The single biggest foreign holder of our debt is China, a country which does not share our values. We are borrowing \$4 billion a day, or 40 cents of every single dollar, to fund our ever-expanding government.

In the month of February alone, we ran a record monthly deficit of \$223 billion. That \$223 billion shortfall—accumulated in just 1 month—puts into perspective the current spending debate we are having in Congress. House Republicans came up with a plan to cut \$61 billion for the rest of this fiscal year, which is an important start. But those cuts only cover a little more than a quarter of the deficit we accumulated in just 1 month.

Yet all I hear from my colleagues on the other side of the aisle is that \$61 billion in cuts is extreme. In my view, the only thing that is extreme is failing to confront the endless flood of red ink that threatens our economic strength and threatens our national security.

The debt we owe is so much more than just numbers. This is about us—who we are as Americans—and what kind of country we want to leave behind for our children. My husband Joe and I are the proud parents of two children—Kate, who is 6 years old, and Jacob, who is 3 years old. I am determined to keep alive the American dream for my children and for all of our children and for future generations in this country. But our addiction to spending in Washington threatens that dream. I, for one, will not sit by while our children become beholden to China.

Hollow words paying lip service to fiscal responsibility have been used by too many in Congress for far too long. New Hampshire families sit around their kitchen tables and find ways to make their family budget work. With limited resources, they make hard choices to distinguish between wants and needs. It is time for our Federal Government to do the same.

That is why the first step we should take is to pass a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. Almost every State in the Nation is required to balance its budget, and our Federal Government should be no different. Last week, I was proud to join with all 46 of my Republican colleagues in supporting such an amendment that caps spending, requires the budget to balance, and makes it more difficult to raise taxes. I ask my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to join us in passing this important measure and to put this vote to the States for ratification.

I appreciate that amending the Constitution is no light matter, but our Founding Fathers could not have anticipated how unwilling Members of Congress would be to actually pass a balanced budget and to make fiscally responsible decisions. Our Founding Fathers were well aware of the threat

posed by debt. It was Thomas Jefferson who wrote:

To preserve our independence, we must not let our rulers load us with perpetual debt. We must make our election between economy and liberty, or profusion and servitude.

In 1997, the Senate came close to getting its arms around the debt when a balanced budget amendment failed to pass this Chamber by just one vote. At that time, our national debt was a little over \$5 trillion. It has nearly tripled since then. Imagine how much stronger our Nation would be today had the Senate approved a balanced budget amendment back then and the States adopted it.

A constitutional amendment requiring a balanced budget is a key first step, but getting spending under control will take a multipronged approach. That is why we must also move quickly to pass serious statutory limits on spending.

One of my honorable predecessors from New Hampshire, Warren Rudman, helped author the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act to require sequestration of funds if Congress failed to act to cut spending within deficit targets. Unfortunately, Congress circumvented the law's provisions by finding loopholes. While that effort may not have ultimately succeeded, we should take the lessons learned from that experience. We need statutory spending caps with teeth that Congress cannot easily undermine.

While I realize that this week we are working to pass funding for the rest of fiscal year 2011, Congress must do something this year that it failed to do last year: Pass a budget. Back home in New Hampshire, people—especially small business owners—are astounded to learn that our Federal Government is operating right now outside the confines of a strict budget. Frankly, it is shameful the last Congress did not approve a budget for fiscal year 2011. Their failure to act is why we are in the difficult place we find ourselves today. Here we are, trying to fund government through a series of patchwork, short-term funding bills.

We need a fiscally responsible budget that cuts Federal spending and puts us on a path to eliminating our debt altogether. State governments operate within a budget, families operate within a budget, small businesses operate within a budget, and the Senate should not be working on any other legislation until we resolve funding for the rest of this fiscal year and pass a responsible budget for 2012.

We have to begin by reviewing every program in our government and eliminating the waste, fraud, and duplication we all know is there. We know there is so much more we can do to streamline our Federal Government. A GAO report released in March identified hundreds of redundant programs costing us billions of dollars.

Finally, it is clear we cannot address our country's fiscal crisis while continuing to focus on only 12 percent of