

mentioned where he spent a lot of his youth: Las Vegas and North Las Vegas, NV.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I congratulate my colleague from Florida, and I want him to know that it is a great pleasure for me to serve with him. It has been a tradition in Florida that the two Senators get along. This has been a great tradition that goes back to when Bob Graham and Connie Mack were the two Senators. It continued with Mel Martinez and me, and now I have the privilege of continuing that kind of relationship with Senator RUBIO.

The maiden speech is a big deal for a Senator, and it is always a memory that is forever etched in my mind.

I was in one of those desks over there as a very junior member, and I will never forget in the course of my speech—and it was mostly an empty Chamber—that I mentioned that it was my maiden speech. In a few minutes, all of a sudden those side doors flung open and in strode Senator Robert Byrd. So here I am giving my maiden speech and Senator Byrd is sitting in his seat. As I finished, he said: Would the Senator yield?

I said: Of course, I yield to the Senior Senator from West Virginia.

Senator Byrd, off the top of his head, gave an oration about the history of maiden speeches in the Senate. Now, of course, that is indelibly etched in my memory. Surely, the Senator's maiden speech today will be indelibly etched in his, and I congratulate him.

I thank him for his personal friendship. I thank him also for the privilege of the professional relationship that we have.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, very briefly, I have come to know Senator RUBIO. We have early morning seminars, and we have come to know one another a little better. I hope that continues. But at this point, I especially thank him for that speech because it was clearly a speech with a lot of personal reflection on one's own life and on the life of America. What he said will endure. There are things in there that we all should remember about this Nation and about our responsibility as Senators.

I thank the Senator for that fine speech, and I am glad that I was here to be a witness to it.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I would note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business for debate only until 5 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, and that at 5 p.m. the majority leader be recognized.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

THE BUDGET

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I thank the Senator for his courtesy in allowing us to proceed and discuss issues at this point in time and wanted to recall for my colleagues that we are now at 776 days since the Senate has agreed to a budget. We have not passed a budget in 776 days. This is not responsible at a time in which we are having the largest deficits this country has ever seen.

This year it is projected our deficit, as of September 30, when the fiscal year ends, will have been \$1.5 trillion. I think this is a big issue.

Last year the Budget Committee moved a budget out to the floor of the Senate, and Senator REID chose not to bring it up, the majority leader. This year he declared that it would be foolish to bring up a budget to the floor even though he has a majority in the Senate. We can pass a budget with a simple majority. It is a priority item. He has apparently asked, and the Budget Committee has not even had a markup.

The Budget Act requires a markup to begin by April 1 and a budget to be passed by April 15 so we can go about the business of funding next year's government. We need a budget. States have budgets, cities have budgets, counties have budgets. No city, county, or state that I am aware of is anything close to borrowing 40 cents of every dollar we spend as this Congress is doing. We are spending \$3.7 trillion. We are taking in \$2.2 trillion. That is a stunning number.

One reason we are so out of control is we do not have a budget. I have been harping away at that, and I have been talking about its impact on jobs. The Rogoff and Reinhart study makes it clear from nations around the world they have studied that when the debt reaches 90 percent of the economy, the entire economy of the country equal to that much debt, median growth drops 1 percent. Really the average is above that, I believe, but at any rate, 1 percent.

We had 1.8 percent growth the first quarter. Could we have had 2.8 percent? We are talking about more than 30 percent reduction in our growth and 1 percent in growth in our economy equals the creation of 1 million jobs. So that is the kind of thing I have been talking about and going into some detail about and have been unhappy and dis-

appointed that my majority leader would have the gall to attack the House Members.

I have a chart. We do not want to forget this number. It is a pretty big number. It is 776. That is how long it has been since we had a budget. So I complained about that. My friend, Senator REID, has the toughest job in Washington, being the majority leader in the Senate. I do not know how he does it, but he has to lead.

As my wife says to me: Don't blame me. You asked for the job. Well, he asked for the job to be the leader, and he announced it was foolish for us to have a budget just a few weeks ago. When will we ever have one presumably?

Just today, earlier this morning, I guess he got a little tired of my harping, and he said: I heard our friend, the ranking member on the Budget Committee—that is me—come here and talk for hours, and he keeps talking about things that really have no bearing on what I think is important to the country today, and that is we know that the Republicans have put forward a budget that destroys Medicare.

Republicans did not destroy Medicare. Give me a break—and that is not the only problem we have facing the country. Medicare is going broke and we need to do something to save it, that is true. There are big issues. One of them is the surging debt that Erskine Bowles, appointed by President Obama to head the fiscal commission, testified about before the Budget Committee just a few weeks ago. He said we are facing the most predictable economic crisis in our Nation's history. This has the potential to put us into another doubledip recession. The economy is not doing well.

The things I have been talking about do have bearing on the future of our country, and I am disappointed my good friend, the Democratic leader, does not agree.

Housing prices continue to drop. They are expected to go down another 5 percent or 6 percent this year. We thought we had hit the bottom on housing. Gasoline is still close to \$4 a gallon. Unemployment just went up. We had a meager increase in 54,000 jobs last month. We need to have about 200,000 to actually reduce unemployment. As a result, unemployment went up. It is the lowest and worst job numbers we have had in some time.

The debt, the economy, gasoline prices, jobs—those are matters that have no bearing on what is important to our country? I think they have a bearing on what is important. What does the majority leader believe? What does he think we should be doing?

This bill we have been fiddling with for weeks has no monumental or significant ability to alter the debt trajectory which is taking us on the most predictable course to fiscal disaster, that is what we need to be addressing. It is the most important issue facing our country. Of that I have no doubt. I do not think anybody has any doubt.