

to hide from a vote on balancing the budget by a simple motion to table—which they are hoping obscures their desire to not balance the budget—but they cannot hide from the markets and the legacy of debt President Obama has given this country because that is a real threat to our credit rating.

Yesterday, Standard & Poor's made clear that avoiding the default was only one variable in their rating of U.S. credit. This is what Standard & Poor's said:

We have previously stated our belief that there is a material risk that efforts to reduce future budget deficits will fall short of the target set by Congressional leaders and the administration. In this light, we see at least a one-in-two likelihood that we could lower the long-term rating by one or more notches on the U.S. within the next three months and potentially as soon as early August . . . if we conclude that Washington hasn't reached what we consider to be a credible agreement to address future budget deficits.

Now, after years of reckless spending by President Obama and his Democratic allies, the chickens are coming home to roost. We face an imminent debt crisis, and a failure to take it on will impose a crushing burden on America's families and businesses. Our economy is stagnant, and the failure of the President to lead on deficit reduction now threatens higher interest rates and will slow it even further.

This is Standard & Poor's analysis of the impact of a debt downgrade due to a failure of deficit reduction:

We assume that under this scenario we would see a moderate rise in long-term interest rates (25–50 basis points), despite an accommodative Fed, due to an ebbing of market confidence, as well as some slowing of economic growth (25–50 basis points on GDP growth) amid an increase in consumer and business caution.

For an economy that is slogging along with anemic growth and job creation, this warning should wake people up. It should make the President and the left get serious about deficit reduction. But, instead, the President is still casting about for a plan.

It is important to remind people that we have a plan. It is called cut, cap, and balance. It culminates in a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution, and it is supported broadly by the American people. Some folks on the other side claim to be for a balanced budget. They claim to stand with the people. But on a party-line vote they voted to table this proposal today.

When America's Founders came together in the summer of 1787 to draft our Constitution, they faced many challenges. But at heart they had a respect for republican government, they had a respect for the sovereign power of the American people, and they understood that the fundamental principle of popular sovereignty gave the Constitution its legitimacy. For that reason, the Constitution they wrote was clear that the voice of the people should be loudest on the most pressing issues.

The provisions for amending the Constitution provided that on the most im-

portant issues, the people rule directly. The Constitution belongs to the people. It only became law because it was ratified by the people, and it can only be changed by the people.

Our Nation is deeply in debt, and this debt now threatens the very liberty of our families and the vitality of our economy. It is a threat to current and future prosperity. Most importantly, it is a threat to limited constitutional government. The people know this. They know it in their guts. They know the problem here is spending. Our problem is too much spending, not too little taxation, and they know what the solution is: cut, cap, balance, and a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution.

There will be talk now about moving on, but I am not moving on. Democrats want to write the obituary on this bill and turn to some new plan or framework this President produces one way or the other, I guess. But no plan this President produces will get us to balance. Cut, cap, and balance does.

I am not so sure what my friends on the other side are afraid of. The founder of their party, Thomas Jefferson, had a deep respect for the democratic process and the sovereignty of the people. What are they so afraid of? Why not pass cut, cap, and balance? Why not send a balanced budget amendment to the States for ratification? If liberals have a better argument, they can lead a fight against the amendment in the States. All they need is 13 States to defeat the balanced budget amendment. Why not let the people decide?

During the last Presidential campaign, the President frequently told his admirers: Yes, we can. Well, now the American people are saying it back to him. They are telling him they want to balance the budget and that we can balance the budget. We can and we should pass cut, cap, and balance and send a balanced budget constitutional amendment to the States for ratification.

I will just repeat it: If the Democrats so hate the idea of a constitutional amendment to balance the budget, all they have to do is get 13 States to vote against ratification. We have to get 38 States to vote for ratification. That may seem like an overwhelming job, but I don't think so. I think the amendment would be ratified so quickly, Democratic heads would be spinning and, I might add, maybe even some Republican heads as well.

All I can say is this country is in trouble. This country is on the way down to self-destruction unless we get it under control, and I don't see one program from the other side that even comes close to showing how we get this under control—except more taxes and more spending. I guarantee, if we raise taxes, they would spend every stinking dime of it. That has been the history of my 35 years in the Senate, as the most senior Republican. All I can say is we are not going to let them get away with it anymore. We are a minority

now, but I believe we can get back in the majority.

I think the Democrats would do themselves a great favor if they would vote for cut, cap, and balance and a constitutional amendment and let the people—let the people—decide. Let them make this decision. Come on, Democrats, all you need to do is get 13 States. What are you so afraid of? I think what is so fearful is that this waltz that has been going on of big spending all these years is going to come to an end.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that we recess subject to the call of the Chair.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 2:16 p.m., recessed subject to the call of the Chair and reassembled at 2:21 p.m. when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. MANCHIN).

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

THE SPACE PROGRAM

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, yesterday the space shuttle *Atlantis* came back in the early morning darkness with those xenon lights illuminating that 3-mile-long runway at the Kennedy Space Center. That is a location that a century ago a set of grandparents of mine had homesteaded under the old Homestead Act, worked the land for the required 4 years. I have a copy of the deed signed by Woodrow Wilson in 1917 to my grandparents. Over three-quarters of a century later, the thought was not lost on me, when we went in that early morning darkness to the launchpad, that my grandparents would have never, ever believed that, so many years later, a grandson was going to literally leave the face of the Earth from almost the old homestead where they had to swat mosquitoes and fight off rattlesnakes and alligators as they eked a living out of that Florida soil.

That was the location *Atlantis* came back to yesterday morning after a 13-day flawless mission after having been launched by the finest launch team in the world. That launch team is now having to disperse in part because we are shutting down the space shuttle program after 30 glorious years. It is an incredible flying machine, with 135