

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

PREVENTING FURTHER ECONOMIC DAMAGE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, there is still time to prevent further damage to the economy and to stop the automatic tax hike on every American that's scheduled to go into effect at the beginning of the New Year. The President has a real opportunity, the second in 2 years, to do something significant about our debt crisis and jumpstart our economy. He has a real opportunity to show he can govern. He is letting that opportunity slip away.

Senate Democrats and the White House now say that a "balanced approach" is one that can pass both the House and Senate. But we know that neither the Democrat bill in the Senate, nor the President's plan for more than a trillion dollars in tax hikes meets their own new test of 'balance.'

Speaker BOEHNER, like me, would like to prevent a tax hike on everyone. But given the President's failure to act, the House will soon vote on legislation to prevent a tax hike on anyone making less than a million dollars a year—rather than letting taxes go up on every American taxpayer; in other words, a plan that 53 of our Democrat colleagues here in the Senate already voted to support. It is a plan that would ensure far more American families and small businesses are protected from tax hikes than anything our Democrat friends have proposed.

Democrats will have an opportunity to offer and vote on changes if they no longer agree with their previous positions. But what they cannot do is sit on their hands and let taxes go up on every American taxpayer. Senate Democrats have wasted precious time all year with show votes designed to fail. That has left us with little time to do the real work that needs to be done. But there is still enough time for us to finish all of our work before this weekend, if we are all willing to stay late and work hard. For the sake of the people who sent us here, it can and should be done.

TRIBUTES TO DEPARTING SENATORS

JIM DEMINT

Madame President, I would like to speak this morning in tribute to an unexpected addition to the list of retirees on the Republican side of the Senate, Senator JIM DEMINT of South Carolina.

They say success has many fathers, but it is hard to think of anyone who has done more than JIM DEMINT to raise the public's awareness on spending and debt, and the threat that big government poses to our liberties.

JIM has been a powerful voice for conservatism during his time in the

House and the Senate. I have no doubt he will be extremely effective in his new post over at the Heritage Foundation. I wish him every success. Because the truth is, the Nation simply cannot continue on its current path, and if JIM can help more people understand that from his new perch on Massachusetts Avenue, then it will clearly have been worth it.

And so while JIM's voice will be missed here in the Senate, we are glad to see he will be putting his considerable talents to good use by helping to arm his former colleagues and many others with the arguments they will need to make the case for constitutional conservatism in the years ahead.

As a young boy, JIM developed a knack for sales by necessity. His mom ran a ballroom dancing school out of their home as a way to keep food on the table for her four children, and part of JIM's job was to recruit the students. He says he still runs into people who attended the DeMint Academy of Dance and Decorum. "Our home sometimes seemed like boot camp," JIM once said, because to survive as a single parent his mom enlisted all four kids for daily duties starting at 6 a.m. It was "the closest I would come to basic training." Interestingly, part of JIM's responsibilities involved filling in for folks who did not have a dance partner.

When JIM wasn't busy in the ballroom, he was working his two paper routes or bagging groceries at the grocery store. On weekends, he fed his love of music as the drummer for a band called "Salt and Pepper." He was best known for his vocals on the song "Wipe-out" and the song's distinctive opening cackle. JIM says he could have been a rock star, if it weren't for the fact that he had no voice or musical talent. So as an adult, he stuck with sales, and it was from there that he launched his political career.

It has not been easy. JIM has always worked hard to ensure that Debbie and the kids remained at the center of his life. I know how much he admires Debbie for keeping her focus on their kids over the years. Theirs has been a true partnership almost since the day they first met all the way back in the seventh grade.

JIM was not always all that political. In fact, those who know him best say that one of the most surprising things about his career is how such a shy and gentle spirit could be viewed by so many as a take-no-prisoners firebrand. As a young marketing executive, he recalls thinking that he had a wife, kids and a business—and that was basically his universe. He did not even know who his congressman was. To this day, one of the things JIM enjoys doing most is working on his lawn back in Greenville. And while he has gotten his share of awards in Washington over the years, I don't think any of them compare with the one his neighborhood association gave him a few years back for "best lawn." He is really proud of that one.

JIM's interest in politics came about when the government started to intrude more and more into his business, and when he started to notice how it unwittingly harmed others. "The more I learned about how things operated," he once said, "the more I understood how problems in our society such as broken homes, crime, and school drop-out were a direct result of well-intended but misdirected government policies."

So he got involved.

In 1992, Bob Inglis walked into his office and asked for his help in running a race in South Carolina's 4th District. JIM took the job and for the first time began to think about running for political office himself. When Inglis retired, JIM decided to run as his replacement. He was 47 years old, he had never run for anything in his life, and Debbie thought he was crazy. But the voters liked what he was selling, and so did his colleagues in the House. They voted him President of their freshman class in 1999.

Six years later, JIM was elected to the Senate. And he has been a leader here as well, working to cut Federal spending and reform how we spend taxpayer dollars. A conservative stalwart, JIM leaves with a stellar 98.77 lifetime rating from the American Conservative Union. And, crucially, he has made a difference. One member of the press corps once referred to JIM as the patron saint of lost causes in the Senate. And, frankly, I don't think we will be abolishing the tax code anytime soon, as JIM has suggested, but that's to miss the point. Great causes almost always start out with a constituency of one, and JIM has never been afraid to take up important and unpopular causes early, and let the polls and punditry take care of themselves.

After becoming what he called a "recovering earmarker," he succeeded in convincing others to give up the practice. As a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, he was also instrumental in resolving a serious problem in Honduras a few years ago after the Obama Administration misconstrued the legal ouster of a president with a political coup. JIM enlisted Miguel Estrada to figure out what was really going on down there, and I was happy to help him travel to Honduras to investigate in person. JIM soon reported back that it was instantly obvious it was not a coup. The story eventually had a happy ending: the Honduran people held a new election and inaugurated a new president and the Obama administration grudgingly backed down. But none of this would have happened without the leadership of Senator DEMINT. "The senator kept the administration honest," Estrada later said. "He was invaluable."

Senator DEMINT and I share a profound commitment to free speech, and he has written eloquently on its importance for our Nation. "Good government," he has written, "is a result of freedom debated." He has called the