

over the debt limit is an absolutely appropriate time to talk about reforming Washington's future spending.

President Obama agreed to spending cuts the last time he asked for an increase in the debt limit. Now the President says he wants his credit limit increased without any effort to reduce future spending. And, of course, we all remember when he was a Senator he spoke out against raising the debt limit. He once called the need to increase the debt limit "a failure of leadership." But that was then. This is now.

The White House has floated gimmicks such as issuing a \$1 trillion coin or using the 14th amendment to raise the debt limit without congressional approval. And now the President won't negotiate responsible spending at all. His policies—his policies of the past 4 years—have buried our children and our grandchildren under a mountain of debt. America needs real budget reform, but President Obama insists on playing politics with our country's credit rating. Hard-working American taxpayers have to balance their budgets. They understand what the President does not.

The President bragged in his press conference last week that "it's been a busy and productive 4 years, and I expect the same for the next 4 years." Well, it looks like he means we can count on 4 more years of wasteful Washington spending.

This has to stop. It is time for President Obama to finally keep his promise to get America's finances in order.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. WARREN). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. HARKIN. I ask unanimous consent that the period for morning business be extended until 5:30 p.m. today and that all provisions of the previous order remain in effect.

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

THE FILIBUSTER

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to give some remarks that I give about every 2 years, I guess, when the Senate reconvenes for a new Congress. Now this is a new Congress, so once again I come here to point out that we need to make some changes in the way we operate.

I have been in this body for 28 years. I am currently eighth in seniority. As soon as Senator KERRY becomes Sec-

retary of State, I will be seventh in seniority. I am proud to represent the great State of Iowa; I am proud to be a Senator, to serve in this illustrious body. I have been in the majority and minority I think up to five times in the Senate. Before that, I served 10 years in the House. I love the Senate. It is a wonderful institution—it is, as envisioned by our Founders.

The Senate at times has been frustratingly slow to encompass the changes necessary to the smooth functioning of our country. I mention in particular the long, long struggle for civil rights and how that was held up by a small minority—which happened to be in my party, by the way, at that time.

Nonetheless, the Senate through the years has really been the Chamber that takes a long and hard look at legislation, where we have the right to amend, where we have the right to discuss and to embark upon discourse on legislation in a manner that allows even the smallest State to be represented as much as a large State. That is not true in the body that both the occupant of the chair and I used to serve in, the House. There, as you know, large States tend to dominate because we have most of the Members. But here, a Senator from Connecticut is just as important as a Senator from California or a Senator from Iowa or—let's see, what is the least populous State? I think Wyoming or Alaska—is equal to a Senator from New York or Florida or Texas or California. This has been a great equalizing body.

Having served here for this time, I think I have some perspective on this Senate. As I said, at its best, this Senate is where our great American experience in democratic self-government most fully manifests itself. It is in this body that the American people, through their elected officials, can come together collectively to debate, deliberate, and address the great issues of our time. Through our Nation's history, it has done so. In the nearly quarter of a century I have been here—well, wait, it is 28 years that I have been here, so it is over a quarter of a century—the rights of Americans have been expanded: Americans with disabilities; we have ensured health insurance for millions of Americans.

In the early 1990s we voted here on the course to eliminate the national deficit in a generation, and we are on our way to doing that.

It is because of my great reverence for this institution and my love for our country that I come to the floor today. One does not need to read the abysmal approval ratings of Congress to know that Americans are fed up and angry with this broken government. In too many critical areas, people see a Congress that is riven with dysfunction. Citizens see their legislature going from manufactured crisis to manufactured crisis. They see a legislature that is simply unable to respond effectively to the most urgent challenges of our time.

Of course, there are a myriad of reasons for this gridlock—increased partisanship; a decline in civility and comity; too much power, I believe, in the hands of special interest groups; a polarizing instant-news media; and, I might add, the increasing time demands on all of us here involved in raising large amounts of money to run for reelection. But make no mistake, a principal cause of dysfunction here in the Senate is the rampant abuse of the filibuster.

It is long past time to make the Senate a more functional body, one that is better able, as I said, to respond to our Nation's challenges. The fact is that I am not a Johnny-come-lately to filibuster reform. In January of 1995—when I was in the minority, I might add—I first introduced legislation to reform the filibuster. We got a vote on it. Obviously, we did not win, but I made my points then, and I engaged in a very good debate with Senator Byrd at that time, in 1995. You can read it in the RECORD. I think it was probably January 8, if I am not mistaken, of 1995.

At that time, I submitted a resolution because, as I said, I saw an arms race in which each side would simply escalate the use of the filibuster and abuse procedural rules to a point where we would just cease to function here in the Senate. I said that at the time. I said that what happens is when the Democrats are in the minority, they abuse the filibuster against the Republicans. Then when the Republicans become the minority, they say: You Democrats did it to us 20 times, we will do it to you 30 times. Then when it switches again and the Democrats are in the minority, they say: Republicans did it to us 30 times, we will do it 50 times. We will teach them a lesson.

On and on, the arms race is escalated. I said at the time that we might get to a point where this body simply cannot function, and sadly that is what happened.

That is why 18 years after I first submitted my proposal, I believe reform is never more urgent and necessary. The minority leader stated that reformers advocate "a fundamental change to the way the Senate operates." To the contrary, it is the abuse of the filibuster, not the reforms being advocated, that has fundamentally changed the character of this body and our entire system of government. Again, I will point out now and I will point out repeatedly in my remarks that Democrats are not guiltless in this regard by any means, but the real power grab and the real abuse has come about when the Republicans have abused this tool—one that was used sparingly for nearly 200 years.

What has happened is that effective control of the Senate and of public policy has been turned over to the minority, not to the majority that has been elected by the American people. In many cases, those who are warning of a fundamental change to the nature and culture of the Senate are the very ones