

try to force each other to do it on the backs of one piece of our large Federal budget.

So to my conservative neighbors or those in the other party, I am sorry, we just cannot do this through cuts to discretionary, nondefense programs alone or through entitlement reforms alone. We cannot responsibly deal with this deficit and debt just within those two areas.

In the last 2 years we already made more than \$1.5 trillion in discretionary spending cuts. On the trajectory we are on now, in the next decade the percentage these programs make of our total Federal Government will drop to levels not seen since Dwight Eisenhower was President, even as our revenues today are at their lowest as a percentage of our economy in 50 years.

Federal spending, done right, in the right sectors, fuels our long-term competitiveness. I am talking about investments in education, in infrastructure, in R&D, and basic science and curing diseases, and in speeding commerce. They are key to our future.

One of our core areas of focus here ought to be on how do we create jobs in a progrowth agenda for our country? By simply focusing on hacking off the domestic, discretionary piece of our Federal budget, it is like an airplane that is trying to get lift but one of its engines is being cut off. We need to sustain investment in some of these critical areas of the Federal budget. But equally, I will say to my liberal neighbors, to folks in my party, we cannot solve this budget problem just by raising taxes on the wealthy and on corporations. The math just does not work. There is not enough we can raise there to deal with the whole challenge.

Remember, the fiscal cliff deal we just passed in the last few weeks will bring in another \$600 billion in revenue over the next 10 years. So we are making progress.

We also cannot do it if we simply ignore the poor fiscal health of our long-term entitlement programs either. Last year Medicare and Medicaid Programs—plus interest on the debt—made up almost 30 cents of every \$1 the Federal Government spent. In two decades, on our current trajectory, it may be 50 cents of every \$1.

Demographics, steadily rising costs of health care will keep driving this, and we must deal with it. Unless we change course, putting all these things together, productive expenditures that grow our economy—medical research, R&D—will be crowded out. Progressive priorities such as Head Start, low-income housing assistance, breast and cervical cancer screenings—the things that help care for the least among us or that help make us healthier will be gone.

So in my view, why not take this moment when we still have a Democrat in the White House and Democrats in control of this Chamber to make tough choices while we have historically low interest rates and fight to preserve the

legacy of the earned benefits—Medicare, Medicaid, and the vital entitlement programs we treasure. In my view, we cannot simply hope that the cost of our entitlement programs comes down and we cannot simply tax our way to economic health. Anyone who tells you that either of these is enough is wrong. Spending has to be cut. Entitlements have to be reformed. Revenue needs to be raised. They are all part of the problem, and they should all be part of the solution.

Somehow, though, when we actually do manage briefly to have a substantive debate on these questions, we tend to spend all of our time focusing on the smallest facet of the Federal budget—discretionary spending—but almost no time discussing these others, the rest of the equation, the big drivers.

This place has become somewhat of an alternative reality where, if we dig in real hard and people get really scared and we use fancy words such as “sequester” or “fiscal cliff,” we can ignore the facts. There is no question that we do have to reduce spending, but the sequester is the worst way to do it. When conceived, the sequester was such a bad idea that both sides were supposed to be motivated to move Heaven and Earth to prevent it from taking effect. That is how terrible it is as policy. Yet here we are.

I am dumbfounded. It is not as though we have not had plenty of time to make this better—18 months, by my count. Why are people talking now in the press here on Capitol Hill about whether BOEHNER will lose his speakership or whether the first person to suggest the sequester worked in the White House or in the Capitol, whether Republicans have more to gain by the sequester kicking in or Democrats? How much time have we been spending trying to fix blame rather than fix the problem? Who owns the sequester seems to be the fight of the day here. Who cares is my question. There are no winners in this fight.

I think the question of how we reduce our deficits, stabilize our economy, prioritize spending that will grow jobs—this debate can either dominate the next 10 years, as we lurch every 3 months from crisis to crisis, or we can address the broader, bigger question and fix it and lay a groundwork for health, for growth, for recovery. Again, the math is not that hard; the politics are.

We here in Congress, with the executive branch, have largely created this problem, and now we need to solve it. Tomorrow, leaders from this Chamber and the House will go to the White House to meet with President Obama about how to address the sequester on the very day it takes effect. On behalf of my constituents, on behalf of the teachers, the police officers, the non-profits, the personnel at Dover Air Force Base, the kids, their parents, my neighbors, on behalf of my State, I urge our leaders to embrace this mo-

ment and to work not only to avert this short-term sequester—not just this \$85 billion in cuts—but to resume their work on the grand bargain. We need a big deal. We need it to be balanced. We need it to be fair. Spending, entitlements, revenue—they all need to be on the table, and they all have to be part of the equation.

My question for everyone in that meeting tomorrow—

Mr. McCAIN. I have to ask for regular order.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority time has expired.

Mr. COONS. I ask unanimous consent for 30 seconds to conclude my remarks.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. COONS. My question for everyone—everyone—in both parties, both Chambers who goes to this important meeting at the White House tomorrow is, How much more time do we have to fight and not to act, to attack and not compromise, to spin rather than solve? Based on the e-mails, the calls, the contacts I have gotten from my constituents, from my neighbors, the time to step up and address this larger problem is now. The sequester, while savage, is not the underlying problem. It is our unwillingness to come together across parties and Chambers to deal with the underlying challenges of our budget. It is my hope, my prayer, that we will take this moment and act.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

AMERICAN FAMILY ECONOMIC PROTECTION ACT OF 2013—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 388, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 18, (S. 388) a bill to appropriately limit sequestration, to eliminate tax loopholes, and for other purposes.

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

Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that in addition to the two cloture votes on bills dealing with the sequester today, there be set a time, to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Republican leader, that without intervening action or debate the Senate proceed to a rollcall vote on the motion to proceed to my alternative bill dealing with the sequester which is now at the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?