

He may as well call his plan what it is, a plan to shift jobs overseas. Basically, it is unilateral economic surrender. To what end? Many experts agree a climate policy that does not include massive energy consumers such as China and India is essentially meaningless. The damage to our economy would be anything but meaningless. Ironically, those are the very types of countries that stand to benefit economically from our loss. Nations such as these will probably take our jobs, keep pumping more and more carbon into the air, and what will we have to show for it? That is a question the President needs to answer today.

Americans want commonsense policies to make energy cleaner and more affordable. The operative word is commonsense, because Americans are also deeply concerned about jobs and the economy. That is what the President should be focused on. Incredibly, it appears to be the farthest thing from his mind.

SENATE GROUND RULES

I have been mentioning on a daily basis the ongoing concern I have about the institution in which 100 of us serve, an institution that has served America well since the beginning of our country. The Constitution was framed back in 1887. George Washington presided over that Constitutional Convention. Legend has it he was asked, What do you think the Senate is going to be like? He reportedly replied it would be like the saucer under the teacup, and the tea that sloshed out of the teacup would go down into the saucer and cool off. In other words, the Founders of our great country believed the Senate would be a place where things slowed down, were thought over, and obviously where bipartisan agreements would be the way to move forward.

Over the period of our history, the idea of unlimited debate has had a lot of support in this body from both parties. In fact, during World War I, it was agreed there ought to be some way to stop a debate. Prior to that, there was no way, actually, to stop a debate. They agreed to create a device called cloture that would allow a supermajority of the Senate to bring debate to an end.

Over the years there have been flirtations by majorities of different parties to fundamentally change the Senate. Those temptations have been avoided. Those temptations arose again at the beginning of the previous Congress and at the beginning of this Congress under the current majority and the current majority leader. There was a lot of discussion about the way forward for the institution that would benefit the institution and not penalize either side. In January of 2011 the majority leader said the issue was settled for the next two Congresses, the previous Congress and this one.

In spite of that, we entered into a lengthy discussion at the beginning of this Congress on a bipartisan basis. As a result of that, the Senate passed two

rules changes and two standing orders. The majority leader once again gave his word that this issue was concluded.

Last January I asked the majority leader: "I would confirm with the majority leader that the Senate would not consider other resolutions relating to any standing order or rules of this Congress unless they went through the regular order process?"

The majority leader said: "That is correct. Any other resolutions related to Senate procedure would be subject to a regular order process, including consideration by the Rules Committee."

The regular order process takes 67 votes to change the rules of the Senate. We did that with the two rules changes earlier this year, thereby confirming, again, that is the way you change the rules of the Senate.

The majority leader, in spite of having given his word, not once but twice, continues to suggest that may not be a word that is going to be kept and has continued to flirt openly with employing what is called the nuclear option.

My party, when it was in the majority some time ago, 8 or 9 years ago, flirted with it as well, but good sense prevailed and we moved backward. We moved into a position where we are today, which is it takes 60 votes when you have a determined minority to get an outcome.

The threat has been related to nominations and nominations only, as if somehow breaking the rules of the Senate to change the rules of the Senate would be confined to nominations in the future. The way that would be done, of course, is the Parliamentarian would say it was a violation of Senate rules to change the rules of the Senate with 51 votes. The majority would simply appeal the ruling of the Chair and do it with 51 votes. If that is ever done, the Senate as an institution we have known is finished, and it would not be confined to nominations in the future.

Senator ALEXANDER and I laid out a few days ago the kind of agenda we would probably pursue, almost certainly pursue, were we in the majority. It was an agenda that would in many ways horrify the current majority, such things as completing Yucca Mountain, repealing ObamaCare, national right-to-work—I mean, things I believe probably every single Member of the majority party would find abhorrent. But that is the point.

The supermajority threshold is inconvenient to majorities from time to time. It requires them to engage in negotiation in order to go forward. It is frustrating from time to time. It is important to remember—every Senate majority should remember—the shoe will someday be on the other foot.

The institution has served our country well. We have had some big debates this year in which we have had amendments, discussions on a bipartisan basis, and bills moved forward. We saw it on the farm bill. We have seen it on other bills. We may well see it on the

bill that is on the floor of the Senate now.

The fundamental point before the Senate is we need to know if the majority leader intends to keep his word, because in the Senate your word is important. In fact, it is the currency of the realm here in the Senate.

I am going to continue to raise this issue because we need to resolve it. Senators need to know that words will be kept. The word on the ground rules of how we operate here in the Senate needs to be kept. We are not interested in a majority that says the definition of advise and consent is sit down and shut up, do things I want to do when I want to do it, or I will threaten to break the rules of the Senate to change the rules of the Senate. This is no small matter, and I will continue to address it until we get it resolved.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half.

The assistant majority leader.

ENERGY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in deference to the Presiding Officer, I am going to forgo my speech on the Stanley Cup playoffs until another Member is presiding later in the day.

Instead, I wish to address the speech made by the Senate Republican leader on the issue of our environment.

Senator MCCONNELL of Kentucky tells us if we are going to discuss the state of our environment in America, it is a war on coal and a war on jobs.

I think he is wrong. I think the Republican approach to the environmental issues is a war on science. It is a denial of the overwhelming scientific evidence that the weather affecting us on this Earth is changing. We know it. Storms, extraordinary storms, are more frequent and more violent than they have been. We know the polar ice cap is melting. We know the glaciers are disappearing. We know the impact this will have on humanity as well as wildlife. Yet from the other side there is a complete denial of science. This is a war on science.

Their position is also a war on public health. Twenty-five million Americans suffer from asthma. Nearly one in five children with asthma went to an emergency department for care in 2009. To