

on a voucher program. That would be saying to seniors, if they are 83 and they have three chronic illnesses, and they run out of Medicare coverage, they are on their own. I can't imagine doing that.

But we compromised. We compromised and said: OK, we will set revenues aside, for now. You will not vote for revenues, Republican Party. Members of the House in the Republican Party, you will not vote for revenues.

So we took revenues off the table. By the way, some people in my party were not happy with that. I got those phone calls: Why did you capitulate? Why did you give in? We gave in because we care about our country, and we don't want to go over the cliff. That is why we gave in. So we gave in on revenues.

The Republicans wanted us to cut spending by more than we raised the debt ceiling. It is a political thing we need to do, not required by the economics, but we have done that. So now we put revenues aside—compromise. We have said we are going to cut spending by more than the rise in the debt ceiling.

Now the only thing we have not compromised on, the only thing—which I think is, really, when we think about it—I didn't think, frankly, this may have been as big of a deal until I stand here today—is to do this again in 6 months, to leave this loaded gun on the table. We are going to leave this loaded gun on the table for our economy?

People can talk to small businesses right now and learn they are scared about what is going to happen next week. Will they be able to borrow money? Will people be able to afford to borrow money to buy cars? Will they be able to afford to borrow money to buy homes?

We talk about the economy going in a tailspin, and we want to keep that loaded gun on the table for another 6 months? There is no way we can provide the certainty in this kind of economic climate if we leave the loaded gun on the table.

So the only thing we have not agreed to that is in the Boehner plan—well, it depends on which plan it is. They keep changing it to try to get enough votes. I don't know what it is today. But the only thing we are not going to budge on is saying to this country and our business community and our job creators: We are going to kill job creation for sure for the next 6 months by telling you we want to repeat this ridiculous exercise in 6 months. We are not going to do that.

The irony is, the people who want us to do that are the people who have been preaching certainty: We have to have certainty. By the way, let's do this again in 6 months. We have to have certainty. It is important we do this again in 6 months.

I know the leader is working on trying to get a compromise today, and I am confident that before the day is over there will be some kind of compromise that will be before this body that we will have a chance to vote on.

I will tell my colleagues this: People will never hear me brag about refusing to compromise. Some of my colleagues from Missouri who serve in the House of Representatives are willing right now to brag about refusing to compromise. They are willing to say it is a good thing to go off the cliff. I will never brag about refusing to compromise because I don't think that is what we do here. When we look back in history, America's brightest moments usually happened around the table of compromise. The most difficult questions this country has wrestled with through the years, we have forged a way forward through compromise, and that is what we needed to. That is what we need tomorrow. That is what we need as we approach the edge of the cliff.

So my last message I will leave with my colleagues across the aisle is this: We have shown our willingness to compromise. Please show us yours. Please show us yours and allow us to vote. Allow us to vote on the compromise. If my colleagues don't want to vote for the compromise, then don't vote for it. But allow us a chance to vote for it. Is that too much to ask, just to allow us an opportunity to move to a vote, to avoid this country having a permanently diminished status in the world? I don't think that is too much to ask.

So let us vote, and if my colleagues can't compromise on the substance of the compromises that will be put forward, at least allow our voices to be heard by allowing a vote.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be equally divided.

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

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended until 3:30 this afternoon, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each; further, that at 3:30 p.m. the majority leader be recognized.

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

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes.

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

FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS WITH SOUTH KOREA, COLOMBIA, AND PANAMA

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I want to remind my colleagues that this work period was supposed to be our opportunity to finally enact, after years of delay, the Free Trade Agreements with our allies South Korea, Colombia, and Panama.

These agreements were signed over 4 years ago, and this administration has had more than 2½ years to submit them to Congress for consideration, but they have failed to do so. Unfortunately, we are going to have to continue to wait at least until September before we get a vote.

Why does it matter that we pass these agreements? It matters for two reasons: first, because expanding trade opportunities creates American jobs; second, because we live in a competitive global economy and other nations are not standing still while we delay.

Economists overwhelmingly agree that expanding trade opportunities creates jobs. The Obama White House, for example, estimates that enactment of these three trade agreements will boost exports by at least \$12 billion, supporting over 70,000 American jobs.

The fact that lowering barriers to U.S. exports will create jobs for American workers is common sense. Consider that our market is already largely open to foreign imports, including those from Korea, Colombia, and Panama. Without trade agreements to ensure similar treatment for our exporters, American businesses will continue to face high tariff and nontariff barriers abroad.

Consider one example: the market for agricultural products in Korea, which is the world's thirteenth largest economy. Korea's tariffs on imported agricultural goods average 54 percent, compared to an average 9-percent tariff on these imports into the United States. Mr. President, 54 percent added on for us to get our agricultural products into Korea; only 9 percent for them to get those same products into the United States, that is a 45-percent differential.

Passage of the Korea Free Trade Agreement will level this playing field. Yet this administration continues to delay sending the agreements to Congress. The Obama White House would prefer to hold these agreements hostage because of a desire to expand the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program rather than improve the competitive position of American producers.

At a time of near record unemployment and slow economic growth, this