

to continue. We will not have supplementals near in this range. We had a \$87 billion supplemental last year, and \$28 billion included in the DOD appropriations bill. We will not have that large an amount of additional money to be used primarily to fight wars against terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan. I am sure we will be spending some money. I am sure there will be some, but it will not be anywhere near that over a 10-year time-frame. CBO assumes we will spend \$114 billion inflated for the next 10 years. That is over \$1.3 trillion. Then, if you add inflation to that, in addition to that, and interest expense that they also assume, that assumes about half of their negative projections.

I might mention, too, my colleague said we have to fix the AMT, and if you add that in and extend every tax cut out there, the deficits will be terrible. I have a couple of comments.

No. 1, the President made a speech at the Republican Convention and said we need to reform the Tax Code. I will not be here, but I hope the next Congress will take the President up on that.

The Tax Code needs to be reformed. AMT is living proof that the Tax Code needs to be reformed. I look at the Tax Code as about a foot tall. I always compare it to the Bible. The Bible is about an inch. Unlike the Bible, the Tax Code contains no good news. I look at the Tax Code and it is complicated. It needs to be reformed. The President challenged Congress to do it. The next Congress should take the President up on that. You can fix AMT. There are an awful lot of anomalies and so many inconsistencies in the Tax Code. You can't fix it a paragraph at a time. You need to rewrite the entire thing. I think that can be done.

You don't have to get in this debate—well, if we continue this or that.

We have to extend the family tax provisions that expire at the end of this year. There are three of them. There is a \$1,000 tax credit per child. That would revert to \$700 per child if it is not extended. We need to extend the marriage penalty relief to allow married couples who have taxable incomes up to \$58,000 so they will pay a 15-percent rate on taxable income up to \$58,000. If you do not do it, it will revert back to some \$40,000. That is about a \$900 tax increase on married couples. Also, the expansion of the 10-percent bracket.

Those need to be done this year. They need to be done this month. Hopefully this Congress will get that done. I expect we will. I am a conferee of that particular bill which is in conference. I am optimistic we will get that extended.

We need to reform the Tax Code. Some people say we need a higher personal rate; we want to sock it to the wealthier people who are paying a 35-percent rate. That is the same rate General Motors pays. I don't think wealthy people should have to pay more than the largest corporations in the world.

I am in favor of reforming the Tax Code. I think the President is right on in that effort. Instead of trying to paint the most negative picture possible with a doomsday scenario of the deficit getting bad, assuming we are going to a war in Iraq every year, which is not going to happen, and assuming a lot of negatives that, frankly, I do not agree with, I think future Congresses can reform the Tax Code and do it without "having higher tax rates" on individuals than you have on General Motors and other corporations.

The good news is CBO says deficits are falling. That is good. The tax cuts we passed last year, frankly, are raising more revenues than people anticipated. That is good. CBO overestimated revenue. They kept telling us we think it is going to be better. Revenue crashed when the stock market crashed. It took a lot of economic viability out of the economy. When we introduced the tax bill last year, the Dow Jones was at 7,700. Because of the tax cut we passed last year, today the Dow Jones is 10,300. The Nasdaq is up over 40 or 50 percent more than it was when we introduced the bill a little over a year ago—almost 2 years ago in January. We passed the bill in June of last year. We have seen very positive results in the stock market. We have seen very positive results in the economy with 4.8 percent growth. Now we have seen very positive results in employment with almost 2 million new jobs created, including in the manufacturing sector which has been on a 1-year decline. We now see an uplift in the manufacturing sector as well. The good news is the economy is growing. The bill we passed last year has had a positive impact.

With the cooperation of Senator STEVENS, we were able to put in a cap on discretionary spending in the DOD appropriations bill. Now Congress can move forward. That is half of our budget.

If somebody wants to know, the budget basically deals with how much money you are going to spend and how much money you are going to tax. This takes care of the spending side of it and puts the cap on spending, replacing the cap we passed in the previous budget. It supersedes that. Now we have a new cap on domestic discretionary spending of \$821 billion. That is what we passed on the floor of the Senate. That is what we agreed to and that is what is now the law of the land. I think that is good news as well. That will constrain spending. We will probably find out later this afternoon.

I think we have some good news on the economy. We have good news because the future deficits are falling. The economy is growing, and we have a little work to do to finish the appropriations bills and to finish action on a couple of tax bills this year.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

SENATE SCHEDULE

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I certainly appreciate the comments of my friend from Oklahoma. There are some positive things that have resulted after a number of very difficult years. I certainly appreciate the leadership which he has given on the budget.

I wanted to talk a moment about Senate business. Of course, I suppose we all have ideas about what we could do. We will be here for another month. Obviously, we can't do everything that is out there before us. Clearly, there were a lot of items we couldn't complete partly as a result of the fact that, frankly, we have not done as much over the last year as we should have and could have done. Some of that, of course, has been because of the Presidential election which is still looming before us. That has caused arguments on a lot of things which are more political than need to be. It is not unusual for the Congress to be political, of course. But I think to the extent it has been, it is more than usual. I hope we can move forward.

I was encouraged about what our leadership said yesterday as we try to move forward and try to actually cooperate on some things. Unfortunately, before the day is over I think we are back into the same old routine of trying to put the blame on everyone, and so on. The fact is we have work to do. We have an opportunity to do it. As I said, we will not all agree on what they ought to be, but it seems to me the real challenge before us is to set some priorities. We have a certain amount of time. We can do a certain number of things. Admittedly, we will have different ideas about what those priorities ought to be. I wanted to share that.

It seems to me it is important to do the things in a timely manner which have an impact on the economy—things Senator NICKLES also talked about. One is appropriations. Appropriations were intended to be done in July and August at the end of the fiscal year—at the end of September. We are a little late on those. The Appropriations Committee has been dealing with them for a long time. It seems to me that we ought to be prepared to move forward within the budget. It is one of the most important things.

I happen to believe energy is one of the most important things we have to deal with, to have an energy policy which gives us some idea as to the direction we are going to take when we deal with the obvious difficulties of energy. The cost of energy, the import percentages we have to expect from overseas, with all of the unrest in the Middle East where some of it comes from—those are the kinds of things we need to deal with. We have talked about it now for about 3 years. We have a policy. A policy has been on the floor. Unfortunately, as it moved to the floor the last time it was filibustered and we lacked the votes to get it passed. We need to pass it. In my view, that would have a great impact on the highway bill.

Again, we have had a highway bill for some time. We had a 6-year bill. It expired a year ago. Now we are proceeding monthly. We need to get a longer term highway bill in place.

As I traveled around my State of Wyoming last month, I probably heard as much about that as anything, how important the transportation system is to all of us. Coupled with that, of course, is the number of jobs developed by having the opportunity to move forward.

I commend the chairman and his staff for working during the recess. We had differences on what the spending level ought to be, which should not have been that difficult because this spending is the result of transportation. That is what those taxes are for; to expend those on highway and related transportation is what it is all for. I understand we are reaching some agreements on what that ought to be. We have had differences with the Senate and the House and the White House. But we need to move forward.

Certainly, our State of Wyoming is particularly dependent on transportation because the miles per capita are very large. We have lots of miles—not only used in Wyoming but used by others with a relatively small population. It is very important to us. The economic impact, of course, is very important. For every \$1 billion spent, 47,000 jobs are created—and created quickly.

One of the problems, of course, is much of the highway construction is done by contracting. If the highway departments within the States do not know what their funds are going to be, it is impossible for them to go ahead and do contracting in the future. It is also very seasonable. Most of the work in the West and the mountain States has to be done in the good weather periods. We need to do something with that.

The Energy bill, as I mentioned, is a total bill. It is not just one or two little things. It has to do with research and the alternative resources of energy in the future. Whether it is wind or conversion of coal to diesel or to hydrogen, it deals with alternative energy as well as renewable. It deals with efficiency and conservation and the use of energy. We can make great strides in that area. It also has to do with the encouragement—giving incentives to domestic production, which, of course, is very important.

We need to make some changes. We need to utilize coal more, for example, because it is our largest resource of fossil fuel. It can be converted into other fuels—diesel, hydrogen, or whatever. We need to use coal to generate electricity rather than gas because gas is so flexible and it can be used for other things. Coal can be used economically in a clean way as well.

There is nothing more important than to have an idea. This was one of the first things that was done at the White House, and we have done it here. I have been on that committee. Yet we have not been able to get it done. Now

it is at the desk. All we need to do is bring it up and move forward.

There are a lot of other things that are very important. We will have to decide whether we want to get things done or whether we want to continue to argue. There is nothing wrong with having different ideas, voting on them, and reaching a conclusion. We have great challenges ahead and only a short time in which to complete them. I certainly urge Members to put their energies into those priorities and complete them.

I yield the floor.

Mr. ENZI. How much time remains for our side?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. There is 8 minutes 45 seconds.

JOBS

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, the economy is getting stronger. The economy has shown 12 straight months of job gains. Last month, payroll employment increased by 144,000 jobs. Nearly 1.7 million new jobs have been created over the past year. The unemployment fell to 5.4 percent—the lowest rate since October, 2001. We have laid the groundwork for the economic recovery we are experiencing today. We have ensured the presence of more capital in our economy which has led to the creation of more jobs for our workers.

President Bush's economic policies continue to create new jobs and move the economy forward. This all adds up to good news for the American people. We have weathered the storm and are poised to enter a new period of prosperity.

However, I have to caution you about some roadblocks that stand in the way of prosperity for our workers and businesses alike. The first roadblock is a gap between the skills our workforce has and the skills our employers need. The second roadblock is the Democrats' obstruction of legislation that will help close this skills gap. First, I will talk about the skills gap so you can understand just how damaging the Democrats' obstruction is to our workers and our economy.

It may surprise you to learn that many good jobs in this country remain unfilled because employers can't find workers with the skills they need. According to a 2003 survey by the Center for Workforce Preparation, an affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, half of the employers reported difficulty in finding qualified workers. The problem is greatest for small employers. Small business—our greatest source of economic growth—can't create jobs if they don't have the skilled workers to fill the jobs.

The gap between the demand for high-skilled workers and the supply will only widen in the future. Looking ahead 2 years, only 30 percent of the employers surveyed by the Center for Workforce Preparation believe the skills of their workers will keep pace. This skills gap blocks the pathway to better jobs and better lives for American workers and their families.

This skills gap also threatens the ability of American businesses to compete in a more complex, global economy. When Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan testified before the Senate Banking Committee, he said that "what will ultimately determine the standard of living in this country is the skill of the people." Why is effective workforce training so important? Because in an increasingly knowledge-based economy, people—their talent and their ideas—make the difference. Human capital is a company's most important resource. The skills and ingenuity of the American workforce will drive our economy in the 21st century and beyond. If we want to keep high-paying jobs in America, our challenge is to equip our workers with skills the global economy demands. We used to manufacture buggy whips. We do not make them anymore. People had to have new skills.

Unfortunately, the current workforce development system is not effectively equipping workers with the relevant skills. Without any action, technology and other advances will outpace the ability of American workers and business to update skills needed to compete. We must improve the Nation's job-training system created under the Workforce Investment Act to better prepare American workers for the good jobs of today and tomorrow. Only a systematic reform of our Nation's job-training system will enable American workers and businesses to compete—and succeed—in the global economy.

There is good news. We have a bill that does this. It is a bipartisan bill that reauthorizes and improves the Nation's job-training system. It will help retrain workers to fill the jobs needed in this country now and in the future. It will link workforce development with economic development, recognizing that job training and job creation go hand in hand. It will partner the public workforce system with private sector employers—including small businesses—and with training providers to better prepare workers for high-wage, high-growth jobs. And this legislation will improve access to job training and employment services in all parts of the country. It will help an estimated 900,000 unemployed workers a year get back to work.

The good news is we have bipartisan legislation that does all of this—legislation that passed out of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee unanimously, legislation that passed on the Senate Floor unanimously. Where is the bill now? Here is the bad news. Here is the roadblock. The Democrats won't let us send this important job-training bill to conference. They are stopping progress by refusing to appoint a conference committee, which is a committee made up of Republicans and Democrats who would meet with the House to work out the differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill, and it would not be the last action on the bill.

If people do not like what happened in conference, it can be filibustered.

An important jobs bill—a bill that will help American workers and businesses—is being held hostage to election year politics. If we really care about keeping good jobs in this country, we need to send the job training legislation to conference—and then to the President to become law.

I owe my constituents more than this. I think we all do. We owe the American people an open legislative process, a process they expect and deserve from us. This is not just an academic question of Senate rules and procedures. A bill that would help put Americans back to work or find better jobs now lies in legislative limbo.

I was reminded just how important job training is to the lives of our workers and the strength of our businesses and communities during a conference held in Wyoming this summer. In June, I attended the Wyoming Summit on Workforce Development. This was a conference designed to teach people how to bring business and jobs to Wyoming. In Wyoming, a lot of our people are leaving the State to find better jobs elsewhere. We know that we have to create the kind of good jobs with good futures that will keep our people in Wyoming. To do that, Wyoming needs workers with skills the new, global economy calls for.

One of the speakers at the summit was a consultant, Robert Ady, who advises companies where they should relocate or open new operations. According to Mr. Ady, a key location factor for a light manufacturing business is the presence of a qualified workforce. Whether a company decides to open a plant in Cheyenne or China depends upon a qualified local workforce. A skilled workforce can make the difference between success and failure in the new, global economy. It makes the difference for our workers, for our companies, for Wyoming and for the United States as a whole.

Almost 200 business participants from around the State attended the Wyoming Summit on Workforce Development. For Wyoming, having 200 business people in one place at one time is a real accomplishment. It showed the need and commitment our businesses have to workforce development. These 200 business participants—most from small companies—represented at least 200 opportunities for Wyoming workers and communities. They are looking to us to put the tools in place to keep the American dream alive in communities across Wyoming and the rest of the country.

There is an American dream. It is to have a family, have a nice home, and have a good job to support that home and family. Prior to my coming to the Senate, my wife and I owned a small chain of shoe stores. As a small business owner, I saw firsthand the impact that job training can have on achieving the dream. We had an employee—a Vietnam veteran—who went through a

workforce training course and ended up managing and then buying two stores from us. He's an example of what you can do with effective job training if you teach workers to dream at the same time.

We have to give workers—and businesses—the tools to turn the dream into reality. Job training under the Workforce Investment Act can turn the dream into reality for millions of American workers. By blocking legislation that improves job training, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are blocking the pathway to new and better jobs for American workers. They are blocking the pathway to prosperity for American families and American businesses.

The job-training bill, known as the Workforce Investment Act, is a central part of a combination of federal education and training programs that provide lifelong learning for the workforce of today and tomorrow. The job-training bill, together with the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Improvement Act when I recently introduced, and the Higher Education Act offer the resources that are needed to help prepare students of all ages for jobs in high-wage and high-skill occupations. In this technology driven global economy, everyone is a student who must adapt to changing workforce needs by continuing to pursue their education. In turn, Congress must ensure that education and job training are connected to the needs of business, including small businesses, now and into the future.

I conclude by urging my colleagues on the other side of the aisle—in fact, I urge the Democratic leader to lead—to allow the appointment of conferees to the job training legislation known as the Workforce Investment Act. The cost of this obstruction is the loss of important legislative efforts that will be felt by American people as it harms the integrity of the legislative process itself.

I hope our bipartisan efforts on the bill can continue. I hope regular order is restored to the appointment of conferees so we can craft the final version of this legislation and get 900,000 people back to work. If we really want to keep good jobs in this country, the Democrats would agree to send this important bill to conference. Our workers and our businesses deserve this bill. They deserve more than this election year political obstruction. They deserve the tools needed to keep American workers and businesses the best in the world.

Mr. President, how much time is left before the next action?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. There is 7 seconds.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. 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. DORGAN. Mr. President, are we in morning business?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The time has expired for morning business.

Mr. DORGAN. I ask unanimous consent to speak for 8 minutes in morning business.

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

REIMPORTATION OF DRUGS

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I rise to discuss the issue of the reimportation of prescription drugs. I do that because we have a very short time remaining in this Congress. We actually began last evening with a couple of votes. I read this morning that the majority leader would like to finish by October 8. There are very few days in which to advance some of these issues. The issue of reimportation of prescription drugs is a very important issue.

We pay the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs. Many of my constituents who live in North Dakota go across the line and purchase identical prescription drugs, FDA-approved prescription drugs from Canada, the same pill put in the same bottle made by the same company sold in Canada and the U.S. The difference is price. One example is Lipitor, a very popular cholesterol-lowering drug. If you buy Lipitor in Canada, it is \$1.01 per tablet. If you buy it 5 miles south of the Canadian border, it is \$1.82 per tablet, nearly double the price for the American consumer. That is the case with drug after drug, when you compare.

A group of us—Senator MCCAIN, myself, and many others—has been working on reimportation legislation that would allow more than just personal use reimportation to come across from Canada, and I have talked to Senator FRIST at great length about this issue.

On March 11 of this year, about midnight, when we were in session that evening dealing with the budget, Senator FRIST and I reached agreement. He put in the RECORD that he would announce that in consultation with the chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, along with Senator DORGAN, Senator STABENOW, Senator MCCAIN, Senator COCHRAN, and others, that the Senate would begin a process for developing proposals that would allow for the safe reimportation of FDA-approved prescription drugs. Now we face the time period when, nearing the end of the session, we have not yet had that vote. There is a bill at the desk that was passed by the House of Representatives. That is one possibility. The other would be bipartisan legislation Senators MCCAIN, STABENOW, others, and I