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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, a Senator from the State of Connecticut.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Hear our prayers, Lord, and deal graciously with our petitions. We put our trust in Your word, as we lean upon Your loving kindness and tender mercies. Bless this land we love, infusing its citizens with strength, wisdom, and faith. Lord, guide those whom we ourselves have set in authority, keeping them from disorder, discord, and division. Lift them to the heights of Your great purposes so they will have daily insights into Your will and way.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable RICHARD BLUMENTHAL led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. INOUE).

The bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, February 14, 2011.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, a Senator from the State of Connecticut, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following any leader remarks, the Senate will resume consideration of the FAA authorization bill. I have spoken to the chairman of the committee. I have spoken to the Republican leader. We are going to do everything we can to move this matter forward as quickly as possible. Those who have amendments should offer them. We will try to set up the votes for those that are already pending at the earliest possible date. We could do some of them in the morning. We may even be able to get a number of them out of the way tonight, if we can work something out on that. At 4:30, we will turn to executive session to consider the nomination of James Graves of Mississippi to be a U.S. circuit judge for the Fifth Circuit and Edward Davila of California to be a U.S. district judge for the Northern District of California.

At 5:30, there will be a voice vote on Graves and a rollcall vote on Davila. Senators should be prepared for additional rollcall votes this evening relating to amendments to the FAA bill.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, earlier today, President Obama showed

the American people just how he intends to spend their tax dollars, and how much more intends to borrow, to fund his vision of the future. And it is a huge disappointment to those in both parties who were hoping the President would take this opportunity to address the grave and imminent fiscal crises we face. The President's budget is the clearest sign yet he simply does not take our fiscal problems seriously.

It is a patronizing plan that says to the American people that their concerns are not his concerns.

It is a plan that says fulfilling the President's vision of a future of trains and windmills is more important than a balanced checkbook.

It is a plan that asks our children to pay for an imaginary vision of the future that may or may not come about by adding trillions to a debt that will be very real to them indeed.

The President's budget comes in at close to a thousand pages. The people who voted for a new direction in November have a five-word response: We don't have the money.

We don't have the money.

Americans have been asking a crucial question as we approached this debate: how do we get back to balance, how do we get to a place where Washington spends less than it takes in. And the simple fact about this budget is that the President and all his advisers couldn't come up with a single year in the next 10 where we do that.

That is the key question in this debate, but it is the one question that the President and all of his advisers don't seem to have been the least bit interested in.

The White House wants us to engage in a debate this week about percentage cuts at this or that agency, about multi-year projections and CBO scores. It all misses the point. The real point is this: We are broke. We don't have the money.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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Look: there is a time to experiment with high-flown plans and to test theories. But we have to balance the check-book first. We have to be able to afford it. The American people get that. This administration doesn't seem to.

After 2 years of failed stimulus programs and Democrats in Washington competing to outspend each other, we just can't afford to do all the things the administration wants.

The President has said he wants us to win the future. But this budget abdicates the future. It spends too much, taxes too much, and borrows too much. It says that the President does not have the will or the ability to do what we need to do with the money that we have. But that is precisely what the Americans are demanding that we do.

Americans reject the idea that they have to live with another \$13 trillion in debt to fund the President's or anyone else's vision of the future.

This budget was an opportunity for the President to lead. He punted. It only pretends to do the things people want. And the reaction we have seen from across the political spectrum so far today suggests that nobody is buying it.

The President may be determined to keep spending levels at the current high levels—high levels he put in place—in the hope that people will get used to them. But he has clearly misread a public that has had enough.

We must live within our means. We must begin to do the difficult but necessary work of reining in a government that has grown beyond our ability to pay for it. We must acknowledge the mistakes of the past 2 years and work to correct them.

The stimulus failed. This budget says "Do it again."

The President has already added more than \$3 trillion to the debt as we lost another 3 million jobs. This budget says let's add more debt and see if we get a different result.

The President had an opportunity to cut domestic spending from the 25 percent he has increased it since he came into office. Instead, he locked it in place.

He had an opportunity to start to pay down the tremendous burden of debt that he has added over the past 2 years. He wants to increase it instead.

He had an opportunity to work with Republicans on reforming long-term entitlements such as Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. He took a pass.

This is a status quo budget at a time when serious action is needed.

This is business as usual at a time when bold, creative solutions are needed.

This is not an I-got-the-message budget. It is unserious, and it is irresponsible.

We need to look for ways to preserve what is good that does not put us on path to bankruptcy. That was the challenge of this budget. The administration failed the test.

After years of overspending by both parties, it is time to make tough choices, just as any family does when times are tough, even among very good things. We have to cut even from programs that are good, as difficult as it is, recognizing that the values we are fighting for in this debate are more fundamental than the survival of any one program. We need to face that fact that we do not have the money. It is not an American value to borrow from others to pay for programs we do not need and cannot afford. And it is not an American value to put off tough decisions because we refuse to say no to things we want.

If there is any good news in this debate, it is that we are finally beginning to talk about how much to cut in this town instead of how much to spend. But we are going to need more people to join the fight. We will need Democrats to join us. Above all, we need a President who gets it. And this President clearly does not get it yet.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. 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. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF THE NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY SHOOTING

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, 3 years ago today, a mentally disturbed gunman walked into a campus lecture hall at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb and shot 22 students, killing 5 of them.

John Peters, the president of Northern Illinois University, the students, families, faculty, and employees pulled together after that tragedy, and I joined them at an observance with then Senator and now President Obama to acknowledge the grief they all felt and we shared. I am proud to report that the Northern Illinois University community is stronger and more resilient today than ever.

In the aftermath of the shooting, we asked a lot of questions about what led to it. Naturally, there were so many innocent victims. We asked what we could have done to prevent it. Three years later, we are still trying to make sense of it.

Some believe that nothing can be done if a disturbed person is determined to commit an act of violence. But I believe something can be done.

For a long time, we have overlooked a very obvious and very compelling

fact. Many young people do not demonstrate serious mental illness until they have left their home and high school and go off to college. We have overlooked the mental health of students on campuses.

Many mental illnesses manifest in this period when young people leave the security of home, regular medical care, and the support of a network of family and friends.

A friend of our family, a young man, went to the same university over 30 years ago. Gary was a peculiar kind of his own type of person in high school. But within 30 days at the university, living in a college dorm, certain mental illnesses we were not even aware of manifested themselves and he suffered from schizophrenia the rest of his short life. It manifested itself at that campus.

It is easier for a young person's problems to go unnoticed when they are away from parents, old friends, and the high school community. Sometimes they get worse. People do not even notice.

The consequences of not detecting or addressing mental health needs among students are very real. Forty-five percent of college students report having felt so depressed it was difficult to function. Ten percent even contemplated suicide.

But while the needs for mental health services on campuses are rising, colleges are facing financial pressures of their own and are having trouble meeting the demand. A recent survey of college counseling centers indicates the average ratio of professional staff to students is 1 to 1,952, and at 4-year public universities it is 1 to every 2,600 students. It is little wonder that many young people with these problems go unnoticed.

Shortly after the tragedy at Northern Illinois University, I wrote a bill called the Mental Health on Campus Improvement Act to help schools meet the needs of their students. The bill would provide resources for colleges and universities to improve their mental health services and would call for the development of a public nationwide campaign to educate campus communities about mental health. We know troubled students who receive appropriate counseling and support can succeed in college and life. These services make an impact. Students who seek help are six times less likely to kill themselves.

By providing critical resources to colleges, the Mental Health on Campus Improvement Act would ensure that more young people receive the help they need before facing a crisis.

The main elements of this bill were included in a proposal to reauthorize the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act last year. I will continue to work on this legislation to get it enacted so we can give colleges the help they need to identify and treat students with mental health issues.