

let's also understand we cannot balance our budget with what the tea party is wanting us to do. We have a huge problem in this country with deficits. We have been a pretty good example of how we can balance the budget. We did it in the Clinton years. We spent far less money than we were taking in. We were reducing the debt. We were not having annual deficits. We know it can be done, but we have to do it in the right way, as we did.

We want to work with our Republican colleagues. We have proven we can do that with the two short-term CRs we have had. But I hope everyone understands that there is only so much the middle class of this country can take. There is only so much we can do to damage the basic fiber of our children, students, teachers, our nurses, and our seniors.

Head Start is a program that has been around for decades, and it helps a lot. It helps little boys and girls learn to read and do their math that they would not ordinarily have the opportunity to do. These are really poor children. H.R. 1 cuts hundreds of thousands of little boys and girls from that program. That does not help our country.

We know cuts must be made, but they must be smart cuts, and we want to do the best we can to work together to do whatever is reasonable to reduce this debt we have. We know it can be done. It has been done in recent history.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following any leader remarks, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business. During that period of time, Senators are permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each. The first hour is equally divided and controlled, with the majority controlling the first 30 minutes and the Republicans controlling the next 30 minutes.

We hope to work out an agreement to vote on the 1099 and the EPA amendments to the small business jobs bill today. We have been trying to do that for several days. A number of Members of the Senate are attending the funeral for the late Geraldine Ferraro. Senators will be notified when votes are scheduled. They will be this afternoon at the earliest.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

TEA PARTY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, anyone who follows national politics

knows that when it comes to a lot of the issues Americans care about most, Democratic leaders in Washington are pretty far outside the mainstream. That is why we have one Democratic leader coaching his colleagues to describe any Republican idea as extreme, and that is why other Democrats are attempting to marginalize an entire group of people in this country whose concerns about the growth of the Nation's debt, the overreach of the Federal Government, and last year's health care bill are about as mainstream as it gets.

I am referring, of course, to the tea party—a loosely knit movement of everyday Americans from across the country who got so fed up in the direction they saw lawmakers from both parties taking our country a couple years ago that they decided to stand up and make their voices heard. Despite the Democratic leadership's talking points, these folks are not radicals. They are our next-door neighbors and our friends. By and large, they are housewives, professionals, students, parents, and grandparents. After last fall's election, a number of them are now Members of Congress.

Later on today, we will hear from many of them outside the Capitol. These are everyday men and women who love their country and who do not want to see it collapse as a result of irresponsible attitudes and policies that somehow persist around here despite the warning signs we see all around us about the consequences of fiscal recklessness. They are being vilified because, in an effort to preserve what is good about our country, they are politely asking lawmakers in Washington to change the way things are done around here. So this morning I thought we could step back and take a look at some of the things they are proposing and then let people decide for themselves who they think is extreme.

At a time when the national debt has reached crisis levels, members of the tea party are asking that we stop spending more than we take in. In other words, they are asking that Washington do what any household in America already does. They want us to balance our budget, and they do this because they know their history and that the road to decline is paved with debt. Is that extreme?

They want us to be able to explain how any law we pass is consistent with the Constitution. This means that as we write new laws, they want us to be guided by the document that every single Senator in this Chamber has sworn to uphold. Is that extreme?

They want us to cut down on the amount of money the government spends. This year, the Federal Government in Washington is projected to spend about \$1.6 trillion more than it has. That means we will have to borrow it from somewhere else, driving the national debt even higher than it already is. What is more, the Obama administration plans to continue

spending like this for years, so that within 5 years, the debt will exceed \$20 trillion. Given these facts, you tell me: Is it extreme to propose that we cut spending?

What else? Well, a lot of people in the tea party think the health care bill the Democrats passed last year should be repealed and replaced with real reforms that actually lower costs. Is that extreme?

Here is a bill that is expected to lead to about 80,000 fewer jobs, which will cause Federal health care spending to go up, compel millions to change the health care plans they have and like, and which is already driving individual and family insurance premiums up dramatically. Businesses are being hammered by its regulations and its mandates. A majority of States are working to overturn it. Two Federal judges have ruled one of its central provisions violates the U.S. Constitution.

None of this sounds extreme to me. In fact, if you ask me, the goals of the tea party sound pretty reasonable. These folks recognize the gravity of the problems we face as a nation and they are doing something about it for the sake of our future. They are engaged in the debate about spending and debt, which is a lot more than we can say about the President and many Democrats here in Congress. They are making their voices heard and they have succeeded in changing the conversation here in Washington from how to grow government to how to shrink it.

In my view, the tea party has had an overwhelmingly positive impact on the most important issues of the day. It has helped focus the debate. It has provided a forum for Americans who felt left out of the process to have a voice and make a difference. It is already leading to good results.

It may take some time, but thanks to everyday Americans like these getting involved, speaking their minds, and advocating for commonsense reforms, I am increasingly confident we will get our fiscal house in order. Republicans are determined to do our part to advance the goals I have mentioned. That is why we have been fighting to cut spending in the near term, and that is why we will soon be proposing a balanced budget amendment. American families have to balance their budgets; so should their elected representatives in Washington. It is not too much to expect that lawmakers spend no more than they take in, unless you think it is extreme to balance the books.

That brings us to the heart of the matter. The last time the Senate voted on a balanced budget amendment, in 1997, the Federal deficit was a little over \$100 billion. Today, it is about \$1.6 trillion. Back then, the national debt was about \$5.5 trillion. Today, it is closer to \$14 trillion. Back then, the amendment failed by just one vote—just one. Today, Democrats are already lining up against it.