

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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 the period of morning business be extended until 8:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each and, further, that at 8:30 I be recognized.

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

Mr. REID. The reason we are extending morning business is the House is having trouble passing the bill, I understand, and so we are waiting until action is taken. They started at 4:30, and it is taking longer than they anticipated. As I understand, they have another caucus in which they are now engaged. It is 7 o'clock, so that is why I thought that at 8:30 we would have a better idea whether they are going to take action tonight.

Again, I would 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. NELSON of Florida. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### DEBT CEILING

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, we are here awaiting the action of the House of Representatives. We don't know whether the House is going to pass the JOHN BOEHNER proposal, but regardless of what they do, we have the solution right underneath our noses. There have been discussions today. I have had a number of discussions with our colleagues. I have had a discussion first this morning with my colleague from Florida and I have had discussions with others.

It seems to me the obvious solution, since we are now at the eleventh hour and getting close to the 59th minute of the eleventh hour, is that we take elements of the Reid proposal, the McConnell proposal, and the Boehner proposal. So I would suggest our leadership consider, regardless of what happens in the House—because the Senate is going to have to act on something to get 60 votes to meet the filibuster threshold in this Chamber and then send a package back to the House. I would suggest it be this: that we take the Reid proposal which includes the larger amount of spending cuts. Senator REID at first said that is \$2.7 trillion. Maybe it has been by CBO marked down to about \$2.2 trillion. But whatever that larger amount—clearly larger

than the Boehner proposal, even though some would argue it is the Iraq and Afghanistan war wind-down savings we would get, but whatever it is, it is larger than the House proposal—and use that as the first cut by lifting the debt ceiling. But there would be a sequence of events that would happen after that to avoid what the Senate Democrats do not want, which is that the markets and the rating agencies cause the debt instruments—the U.S. Treasury bills—to be downgraded. There needs to be certainty for those rating agencies, for the U.S. Government debt, and it could be achieved this way: We have a BRAC-like committee—that being a committee that would be composed equally of Republicans and Democrats—that would come up with a package that would then come back to each House, no amendments, for an up-or-down vote.

The fail-safe backup, in case that committee were not able to come to agreement or in the event that it came back to both Houses and one of the Houses did not pass it, that we would then have the McConnell proposal, which is that the President would request the increase of the debt and there would be this procedure that Senator MCCONNELL laid out that there would be a resolution of disapproval. If there were such a disapproval, then the President, of course, could veto it. In order for the President's veto to be overridden, there would have to be a two-thirds vote. There would not be a two-thirds vote, and, therefore, there is the assurance that we would have the raising of the debt ceiling to get us through this next year and a half.

It seems as though it is right under our nose, if the parties will just realize that now is the time we have to act to find a workable solution so we can get the votes.

If we can get, with that kind of proposal, 60 votes in the Senate, then it goes down to the House, whether they pass the Boehner proposal or not. At the eleventh hour and the 59th minute, recognizing what is at stake for the country, then the House of Representatives is going to do the right thing and they are going to pass it.

I am just a little country boy, but it seems to me sometimes we get so wrapped up in all the intricate details that the obvious solution is right there under our nose, staring us in the face. I respectfully request the Senate consider this.

I yield the floor.

#### CRISIS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise today to bring attention to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa. More than 11 million people—twice the population of my State of Maryland—are now in need of emergency assistance to survive.

Large portions of the Horn of Africa region are now in the grip of one of the worst humanitarian crises in the re-

gion in recent decades. Nearly half of the population in Somalia is in urgent need of assistance, and malnutrition rates are on the rise in neighboring Ethiopia and Kenya. Without the immediate action of the international community, it is projected that an additional 180,000 people will perish in the coming months due to the drought and famine.

It is difficult to fully comprehend the levels of human suffering currently occurring in the region, as refugees flee famine-affected areas. People are literally walking for days without food and water to try to reach food and safety. More than 166,000 desperate Somalis are estimated to have fled their country to neighboring Kenya and Ethiopia in recent months—approximately 3,500 people are arriving every day at refugee camps in those countries compounding the already tenuous humanitarian situation in the region.

On July 21, the United Nations declared a famine in two regions in southern Somalia. This declaration is not done lightly and is the first declared since 1992. Famine is only declared when acute child malnutrition rates exceed 30 percent and more than 2 people per 10,000 die per day. The U.S. Agency for International Development, USAID, reports that the under-5 death rates in southern Somalia are higher than 4 children per 10,000 per day in all areas and as high as 13 to 20 per 10,000 per day in areas of south central Somalia. Already, outbreaks of measles, cholera, and watery diarrhea have been reported in affected areas as well. Unless this is addressed immediately through immunization campaigns and medical treatment, more people will perish from these preventable diseases.

The United States is one of the largest donors of emergency assistance to the region, helping more than 4.4 million of those in need and providing over \$431 million since last October. The actions taken by our Nation and the international community in anticipation of the drought last year has helped save countless lives. Through the Famine Early Warning System, we saw data come in, and we were able to move resources into the region and implement programs to provide food in critically affected areas throughout the Horn of Africa. However, emergency assistance alone cannot solve the underlying long-term problems. The United States continues to provide longer term development assistance through Feed the Future and other programs, which are working in the region to address the root causes of hunger and malnutrition.

USAID Administrator Shah was in Kenya last week and met with Somali refugees there. He met with a woman who had traveled for 33 days by foot with her two children and suffered a robbery along the way, in order to arrive at a refugee camp in Kenya and have access to safety, food, and basic human security. He also visited with a 4-year-old boy who, in the acute malnutrition wing of the hospital at the