

Through 2023, the cost to States is now estimated to be an additional \$118 billion. In my home State of Georgia, the expansion will cost the State about \$2.5 billion through 2020. Money in the budget to pay for this expansion will come at the expense of higher education, transportation, and law enforcement services. Nationally 24.7 million people who will be added to the Medicaid rolls will be entering a broken system where patients are denied access to about 40 percent of the physicians because reimbursement rates do not keep up with medical costs.

Two years ago the legislative process that unfolded before us was not something any Senator should be proud of today. Backroom deal making and forcing legislation through under a subversive process left the American people angry and upset with Congress. If we don't understand that, just look at the approval rating of Congress today, and this played a major role in that approval rating.

I hope in the future we will have an opportunity to revisit the system. Our system does need reforming, but it needs to be done in the right way and it needs to be done in a very transparent way. I hope we can come up with a solution that is actually supported by the American public, not solutions that make the American public angry.

I yield the floor.

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

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

OBAMA/MEDVEDEV EXCHANGE

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I come to the floor today greatly disturbed and upset, as are many Americans, by the comments President Obama made on Monday to outgoing Russian President Dmitry Medvedev at the nuclear security summit in Seoul, Korea. The exchange, which was accidentally recorded by a Russian journalist, suggests that President Obama's stance on missile defense will change after the November election. It implies that the President is willing to make more concessions to an authoritarian government that has caused Americans concern time and time again. It raises questions about what else might be hidden on the President's agenda if he secures a second term in the White House.

Americans can view the recording themselves as President Obama tells Mr. Medvedev:

On all these issues, but particularly missile defense, this can be solved but it's important for him [Putin] to give me space.

"Him" meaning former and future President Vladimir Putin. Mr. Medvedev responds by saying:

Yeah, I understand. I understand your message about space. Space for you.

President Obama then goes on to say:

This is my last election. After my election, I have more flexibility.

It is unbelievable and chilling that President Obama would make his election a factor in how he deals with an important national security issue that could have dangerous implications for America and its allies. Even the hint of compromising on our missile defense capability is reckless when the prospect of nuclear-armed missiles is a real and growing threat.

Equally alarming is the looming question lingering over what the President actually means when he says "more flexibility." The administration continues to press for resetting bilateral relations but fails to follow through on an approach that takes into consideration how Russia has not made good on its promises in the past. Simply put, we cannot trust the Russian Government to keep its word. We have no reason to believe that greater cooperation will come from giving the Russians what they want.

The question now arises: How can we trust our own President not to say one thing before the election and yet do something entirely different afterwards? Let us not forget the Russian Ambassador vetoed two United Nations Security Council resolutions supporting the Syrian people, a move that prompted the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, to say that Russia decided to stand with a dictator. Indeed, Russia seems comfortable standing beside a dictator.

In addition, Russian officials rejected the idea of tougher sanctions against Iran despite a report from the International Atomic Energy Agency reinforcing concerns about Iran's nuclear program. Russia also voted against the United Nation's General Assembly resolution expressing concern over the "violations of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights" in North Korea.

Many of my colleagues and I have come to the floor on multiple occasions to express our concern with Russia's deteriorating rule of law and respect for human rights. This is not the kind of relationship President Obama promised when he pressed for passage of the new START treaty in late 2010 over strong objections from many of my colleagues. It sends the wrong signal to our allies throughout Europe who are worried about undue pressure from Russia. At the end of the day, better U.S.-Russian relations are not a foregone conclusion, and President Obama would be wise to remember that one-sided promises are not the means to get there. He should also not forget that the Constitution requires the advice and consent of the Senate on foreign policy decisions.

Over the coming months the Senate will likely take up several issues related to Russia, and I look forward to having a frank discussion about the President's ideas and the President's intentions. Mr. Obama's comments in Seoul are only one instance of the

President pledging to have more flexibility after election day, but they rightly cause us to speculate about what else he expects to do. Americans are right to wonder what other promises are being made that we do not know about.

At the end of the exchange in Seoul, President Obama and President Medvedev clasped hands and Mr. Medvedev promised, "I will transmit this information to Vladimir." In other words, but for the accident of an open microphone, the President's intentions would have been known by Mr. Putin, but not known by the American people. Mr. Medvedev's reply is a grim reminder of what happens when one person is able to seize unrestrained power, as Mr. Putin has demonstrated, and should be a lesson for all of us. It also should give all Americans pause as we approach this fall's election.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. REED). Without objection, it is so ordered.

IMPOSING A MINIMUM EFFECTIVE TAX RATE FOR HIGH-INCOME TAXPAYERS—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 339, S. 2230 is now pending; is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. I have a cloture motion at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 339, S. 2230, a bill to reduce the deficit by imposing a minimum effective tax rate for high-income taxpayers.

Harry Reid, Sheldon Whitehouse, John D. Rockefeller IV, Barbara Boxer, Patrick J. Leahy, Jeff Bingaman, Richard J. Durbin, Daniel K. Akaka, Al Franken, Jack Reed, Mark Begich, Sherrod Brown, Carl Levin, Richard Blumenthal, Bernard Sanders, Debbie Stabenow, Charles E. Schumer, Patty Murray.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum required under rule XXII be waived and the vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to S. 2230 occur on Monday, April 16, when the Senate resumes legislative session immediately following the vote on the confirmation of Stephanie Dawn Thacker.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—
EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with Senator MCCONNELL, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 231; that there be 2 hours for debate equally divided in the usual form; that upon the use or yielding back of time the Senate proceed to vote without intervening action or debate on Calendar No. 231; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any related statements be printed in the Record; that President Obama be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I mentioned to the majority leader I have to do some more consultation over here in order to clear this nomination, but for the moment I must object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

IIHF 2014 WORLD ICE HOCKEY
CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in the last few years, we have seen dictator after dictator tumble across the world: Qadhafi in Libya, Ben Ali in Tunisia, Mubarak in Egypt, Saleh in Yemen, and eventually Bashar al-Assad in Syria.

Yet there is one dictator who hangs on. He is the last dictator in Europe. You may not be familiar with his name, but they certainly know him in neighboring countries. He is the strong-man President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko.

For more than 20 years, he has ruled Belarus with an iron fist—using a barbaric combination of repression, intimidation, and torture to maintain power. He is so bold as to continue to call his security services the KGB. Can you imagine in today's world calling your security service the same name as the dread security service of the Soviet Union, the KGB?

Under Lukashenko's reign, elections have been consistently rigged, arrests have been made for political purposes, and the public's basic freedoms of

speech, assembly, association, even religion—which we take for granted—are severely restricted.

As shown in this photograph I have in the Chamber, this is Alexander Lukashenko, the last dictator in Europe, the President of Belarus.

On December 19, 2010, Lukashenko was given an opportunity to ease the iron grip of his police state and move closer to democracy by holding a legitimate Presidential election. He could not bring himself to do it. He orchestrated a fraudulent election, and then he turned around on the day of the election and arrested all of his opponents who had the audacity to run against him and threw them in prison. How about that?

I was in Belarus shortly afterwards and met with their families. These people were distraught, beside themselves about what had happened.

One of these detainees who was eventually released came and saw me in November, Ales Mikhalevich, one of the Presidential candidates who had been arrested, tortured, and denied basic legal rights for months. Recently he had been given political asylum in the Czech Republic, where he continues to fight for human rights in Belarus. His wife and daughters, whom I met in Minsk, in Belarus, are still being harassed by the KGB as of today.

Ales Mikhalevich and others from the hundreds who were imprisoned have been released, but others were not so lucky.

Mikalai Statkevich, a Presidential candidate, was sentenced to 6 years and can barely receive the medical assistance he needs.

Andrei Sannikau, another Presidential candidate, was sentenced to 5 years in prison for having the boldness to run against this dictator.

A number of other political activists who have engaged in political activity which we take for granted in the United States have been languishing in prison. I thought about it this week, as the demonstrators gathered in front of the Supreme Court, marching back and forth with signs, how we take that for granted. You try to do that in a country like Belarus, you will end up in prison. Thank God the United States has a much better standard when it comes to basic rights.

Here are the names of some of the other activists Lukashenko has thrown in prison: Zmitser Dashkevich, Eduard Lobau, Paval Sevyarynets, Zmister Bandarenka, Ales Byalyatski, Mikalai Autukhovich.

Authoritarians frequently torture these activists, trying to pressure them to sign letters admitting a guilt that does not exist. But I want to speak about something that is going to come up where Belarus and Lukashenko are going to become international celebrities.

On February 16, Mikhalevich, whom I mentioned earlier, was one of the 13 who picketed the headquarters of Prague-based automobile company Skoda, a subsidiary of Volkswagen.

Why did they picket Skoda?

Skoda is one of the major sponsors of the International Ice Hockey Federation's World Championship, and has been for the last 19 years. In fact, Skoda's this automobile company's—relationship with the Hockey Federation is one of the longest lasting sponsorships. And much to the disbelief of the rest of the world, the International Ice Hockey Federation has chosen to host its championship in Belarus. Why? Because Lukashenko, the dictator, is such a big fan of hockey. All the while, political prisoners, including Presidential candidates, will be languishing in prison because of this dictator.

Companies such as Skoda, Nike, and Reebok are among the major corporate sponsors of this federation that is holding its championship in Belarus.

Last year, I joined Congressman MIKE QUIGLEY of Chicago and National Hockey League Hall of Famer turned European Parliamentarian Peter Stastny and wrote to the International Ice Hockey Federation President Rene Fasel, urging that the 2014 games in Belarus be suspended until the political prisoners are released. How can anyone celebrate the excitement of a world-class sports championship when people are languishing in prison for their political beliefs? They ignored our request.

I spoke to USA Hockey, which represents the United States in this federation. They paid no attention.

It turns out the International Ice Hockey Federation will be meeting next month in Finland. Belarus is likely to be on the agenda. It should be. It should be at the top of the agenda.

The honor of hosting this prestigious international sporting event in a country where the President is regarded as Europe's last dictator is hardly a reflection of the quality of the sport that is involved.

An ardent fan of ice hockey and the head of the Belarus national Olympic committee, rewarding Lukashenko with the 2014 World Ice Hockey Championship ignores his regime's atrocities.

I have tried to reach out to Skoda, owned by Volkswagen, Nike, Reebok, and other sponsors to let them know their image is at stake too if they validate this dictator's policies and give honor to a country which does not recognize the basic freedoms.

This photograph I have in the Chamber shows Skoda's CEO, Winfried Vahland, in the center, along with Hockey Federation President Fasel on the right, as they celebrate Skoda's commitment to sponsor the world championship through 2017.

Skoda contends its sponsorship of the event does not indicate approval of what is going on in Belarus—simply their dedication to hockey. That does not show much courage.

Lukashenko's preparations for this ice hockey tournament indicate that Belarus is expecting a lot of visitors and a big economic boost.