

to \$24 billion. We will again revisit historical reforms to save the U.S. Postal Service, and we will take up legislation to make whole victims of Hurricane Sandy. Each of these initiatives passed the Senate on a bipartisan basis after deliberation and debate during the last Congress but was left to languish by the House.

The Senate will continue to help our fellow Americans recover from Hurricane Sandy before another similar disaster strikes. Hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses were destroyed in New York, New Jersey, and New England, and tens of thousands of Americans were left homeless by this destructive storm. We have a responsibility to aid our countrymen as they rebuild their lives and their communities, as we have after terrible floods, fires, and storms in other parts of our Nation.

Once we complete that vital legislation, the Senate will take action to make this institution we all love—the U.S. Senate—work more effectively. We will consider changes to the Senate rules. Because this matter warrants additional debate, today we will follow the precedents set in 2005 and again in 2011. We will reserve the right of all Senators to propose changes to the Senate rules, and we will explicitly not acquiesce in the carrying over of all the rules from the last Congress. It is my intention that the Senate will recess today rather than adjourn to continue the same legislative day and allow this important rules discussion to continue later this month. I am hopeful and cautiously optimistic that the Republican leader and I will reach an agreement that allows the Senate to operate more effectively in the coming months.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). The Republican leader is recognized.

#### NEW BEGINNINGS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to start by congratulating President Obama on his inauguration. Presidential inaugurations are always a time for the country to come together. We all feel a certain pride in the event, and we are reminded of how fortunate we are to live in a Nation where we have the ability to choose our leaders freely and resolve our differences in peace. Inauguration Day is also a time for new beginnings, a chance to learn from the mistakes and missed opportunities of the past as we reengage in some vitally important debates about our future.

Too often over the past 4 years, political considerations have trumped the need to put our country on a sound financial footing and a path to prosperity. Today we should recommit ourselves to the task of facing up to our

problems head-on. I understand that the passions of an election can sometimes overshadow the business of governing, but the Presidential campaign is now behind us, and so it is my hope that the President will finally be willing to do what Republicans have been asking him to do since his first inauguration 4 years ago, and that is to work with us on identifying durable solutions to the problems we can only solve together, to put aside those things we know we can't agree on and focus on what we can.

We should start with spending and debt because if we don't get a handle on that, nothing else matters. If we don't work together to strengthen our entitlement programs, they will go bankrupt. Automatic cuts will be forced on seniors already receiving benefits, rendering worthless the promises they have built their retirements around. It is nice to say, as the President did yesterday, that these programs free us to take the risks that make our country great, but if we don't act to strengthen and protect them now, in a few years they simply won't be there in their current form. And if we don't work together to control the debt, then the cost of our interest payments alone will eventually crowd out funding for things we all agree on—from defense, to infrastructure, and assistance for those who need it most. In short, the debate we are now engaged in over the growing Federal debt is about much more than numbers on a page; it is about the cost of inaction in terms of promises broken, jobs lost, and dreams deferred. That is why there is simply no more time to waste.

Over the past 4 years, while the President focused on reelection and too many Senate Democrats focused on avoiding tough decisions, the debt grew by more than \$6 trillion. We saw the President blast House Republicans for doing their job and passing a budget while Senate Democrats didn't even propose one. Rather than work with us to save existing entitlements, we saw the President team up with Democrats in Congress to force through a brandnew entitlement that will make it even harder to cover the cost of programs we already have. In short, Democrats have put off the hard stuff until now, and our problems have only gotten worse.

But that was the first term. A second term presents the opportunity to do things differently, and in the Senate that means a return to regular order. Later this week the House plans to send the Senate a bill to address the debt limit in a timely manner. Once we get it, the Senate should quickly respond. If the Senate version is different from the one the House sends over, send it to conference. That is how things are supposed to work around here. We used to call it legislating.

I know a lot of Democrats are afraid of a process that exposes their priorities, particularly on spending and

debt. After nearly 4 years of refusing to pass a budget, they have only now reluctantly agreed to develop a spending plan for the coming fiscal year. All I would say to that is since the revenue question has been settled, I am sure the American people are eager to see what other ideas Democrats might have to bring down our ruinous deficits.

Let me just say that one thing Americans will no longer tolerate is an attitude that says we can put off our work until the very last minute. They are tired of eleventh-hour deals. They are tired of careening from crisis to crisis, and so am I.

The good news is that a return to regular order is the surest way to solve the problems we face. And I hope some of my friends on the other side will agree that there is value in this body actually functioning the way it was intended to. Let's face it. The status quo isn't working. The Senate isn't functioning as it should. It has nothing to do with the process that has served us well for a very long time. But if we work together and strive to avoid some of the bad habits that have developed around here, I truly believe we will be able to achieve the kinds of solutions that have eluded us for the past 4 years and deliver some positive results for the people who sent us here, with time to spare.

We can do better. I know my constituents expect better than what they have been getting from Congress in recent years, and so should we.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for debate only until 12:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Indiana.

#### CHALLENGES AHEAD

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I appreciate the remarks of the minority leader, and I think he essentially gets to the point all of us, in this first week for the 113th Congress, need to be focused on and need to address. This is our first workweek back after the inauguration festivities of yesterday, and I think it is an appropriate time for the Members of this body to discuss the challenges that lay before us over the next 2 years.

The most critical and, in my opinion, the most pressing of these challenges is one we have been dealing with for the past 2 years and is now of even more critical importance, and that is the out-of-control government spending that weakens the health of our economy, threatens the security of our country, and jeopardizes opportunities for future generations.

When I arrived here 2 years ago, it was clear the American people were