

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 75) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 75

Whereas Dr. William Camac, a legendary Philadelphia physician, led a concerned community of citizens, educators, and scientists to charter the Zoological Society of Philadelphia—America's First Zoo—on March 21, 1859, housed on a bucolic, 44-acre property in Fairmount Park along the West Bank of the Schuylkill River;

Whereas the Philadelphia Zoo has emerged over the past century as a national and global treasure and as one of Philadelphia's most cherished, enduring, and significant educational, scientific, and conservation institutions and cultural attractions;

Whereas the Philadelphia Zoo was the site for breakthrough research that led to the award of the 1976 Nobel Prize for Medicine;

Whereas since its inception, the Philadelphia Zoo, through its myriad research and curatorial activities, has consistently and successfully protected, promoted, and preserved numerous rare and endangered wildlife species around the world;

Whereas since its landmark gates opened to the general public, the Philadelphia Zoo has welcomed more than 100,000,000 visitors, including millions of school children from the greater Philadelphia community over generations; and

Whereas the Philadelphia Zoo's sesquicentennial on March 21, 2009 is an achievement of historic proportions for Philadelphia, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the United States, and the world conservation community: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate recognizes the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Philadelphia Zoo on March 21, 2009.

GREATER WASHINGTON SOAP BOX DERBY RACES

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the immediate consideration of H. Con. Res. 37, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the concurrent resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 37) authorizing the use of the Capitol Grounds for the Greater Washington Soap Box Derby.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consideration of the concurrent resolution.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the concurrent resolution be agreed to, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and any statements be printed in the RECORD.

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

The concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 37) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

APPOINTMENTS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore, pursuant to provisions of Public Law 106-79, appoints the following Senator to the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission: The Senator from Utah, Mr. BENNETT.

The Chair, on behalf of the majority leader, pursuant to the provisions of Public Law 99-93, as amended by Public Law 99-151, appoints the following Senators as members of the United States Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control: the Honorable CHARLES E. SCHUMER, of New York, and the Honorable SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, of Rhode Island.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio is recognized.

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for up to 30 minutes.

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

ENTITLEMENT AND TAX CODE REFORM

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, I rise today to call attention to what I refer to as the irresponsible and reckless fiscal path we find ourselves on as a nation and to urge my colleagues to act now to take the first step toward meaningful, comprehensive tax and entitlement reform.

On Tuesday night, we gathered here to cast our votes on the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009. I could not vote for this bill because it ignores the fiscal realities we find ourselves in today. This omnibus bill, which includes \$408 billion in nonemergency spending, is 8 percent larger than it should be. Some agencies in the bill are set to get a 40-percent increase in funding. From my experience as a former Governor of Ohio and the mayor of the city of Cleveland, I do not believe those agencies have the capacity to spend that kind of money. This adds to the \$787 billion stimulus bill that was passed last month. It increases the already staggering \$10.9 trillion national debt and continues to expand the size of the Government at what has become an alarming rate.

As you can see from this chart, Federal spending as a percentage of GDP averaged just under 20 percent under President Bush. This year, under President Obama, it will reach almost 28 percent, and his administration projects that it will average out to over 23 percent across two terms. In other words, I came to the Senate in 1999, and this is what we were spending, totally, on Medicare, Medicaid, all the other appropriations. Then, as you see, it started to go up. We have to be honest, that is where we started to borrow money because we were not taking in enough money to pay for it, so we started to have deficits. Then, under Bush, it started to go up some more.

Here we are in 2009. You can see that the size of the Government is up to 27.7

percent. That is what we are spending on everything. We have gone from 8 percent to 27.7 percent. That is going to start to slide down. In 2012, the President says to us, don't worry, we are going to reduce the deficit spending by 50 percent. Look at this, it continues to spend out at this point, and by 2016—I have not shown it on the chart, but it just keeps going. We just cannot keep going that way. That is over half a trillion dollars a year we are borrowing to run the Government.

To complete what I call the triple whammy to our national debt, the administration adds to the stimulus and omnibus a new 10-year budget where the lowest deficit for a single year is larger than any annual deficit from the end of World War II.

In fact, President Obama's smallest deficit is larger than President Bush's largest deficit. And that is true despite proposing the largest tax increase in American history, including a new energy tax that will expose the false claim that we will not raise taxes on the middle class. This \$646 billion tax increases will affect rich, poor and middle class alike. Yet future generations will still be burdened with higher debt. So we have gone from—and I am not proud of some Republican years, what we did. As I used to say, the Democrats tax and spend; the Republicans spent and borrowed. Now we have gone to spend, borrow, and tax.

In spite of all of that, we are going to have these gigantic deficits as far as we can see in this country. Simply put, our spending is out of control. We are spending and funding more money at a time when we should be finding ways to work harder and smarter and do more with less. I know a little bit about this, because I took over Cleveland, the first city to go into default in the depression of 1979. We were in deep trouble. I took over the State of Ohio. We were \$1.5 billion in debt at that time. We had to cut the budget four times, and ultimately had to increase taxes in the margin. I know what this is about.

But nobody is talking about “working harder and smarter” or “doing more with less.” If you look at the stimulus, we spent \$787 billion, and now some congressional leaders are talking about putting together a second package. I cannot believe it. We cannot continue down this path.

It is our responsibility to make budgeting decisions based on our Nation's fiscal situation and to take into consideration the impact it is having on others but, more importantly, on our children and grandchildren. Over the past year, we have been hit by an economic avalanche that started in housing, quickly spread to the financial and credit markets, then continued onward to every corner of the economy and across the world.

We have taken steps over the past months to dig out of the avalanche. But we have not reinforced our tax and entitlement system's crumbling foundation. In other words,—I have been

talking about this for 8 years—we need to have tax reform and entitlement reform. Now all of this other stuff has hit us, but the fact of the matter is, that is still there. We need tax reform. We need entitlement reform. And that is why, despite the enormity of the legislation passed over the past month, there is still a sense of great anxiety on Main Street and my street. I still live in the house that Janet and I bought in 1972. I am with real people every day. They are very concerned about the future. They get it.

The stimulus and omnibus has caused everyone who paid attention to say: My God, we have to do something to get back on firm fiscal footing. They know that unless we fix our tax and entitlement system we might as well be flying a kamikaze plane.

When I arrived in the Senate in 1999, gross Federal debt stood at \$5.6 trillion or 16 percent of GDP. The Obama administration recently projected the national debt to more than double, to \$12.7 trillion by the end of fiscal year 2009. That would amount to a 126-percent increase compared with only a 56-percent increase in the gross domestic product during the same 10-year period.

From 2008 to 2009 alone, the Federal debt would increase 27 percent, boosting the country's debt-to-income ratio or national debt as a percentage of our gross domestic product from 74 percent last year to 89 percent this year.

The Pacman. Here it was in 1999. Federal debt. And it is up to 70. We are now up to 89 percent. I think there are still some people who understand Pacman. When I was Governor of Ohio, I used to say that Medicaid—I am sure the Presiding Officer understands that Medicaid is the Pacman that kept eating up the budgets in your State.

Under the Obama budget, though, at 2017, for the first time since 1947 when we were paying down our World War II debt, the national debt will be larger than the size of the entire American economy.

At that point, we will be too fat and out of shape to escape from our creditors around the world. That is what it is going to look like. In 2017, it is more than 100 percent of our gross domestic product. Think of that. Today, if we are candid with the American people, when you consider the TARP, the stimulus package, and the money we continuously borrow from the Social Security trust fund, we are facing a projected budget deficit of \$1.9 trillion, which is more than four times the reported 2008 deficit of \$455 billion as a share of the economy.

The 2009 deficit will become the largest recorded deficit since World War II. Last June when I spoke here on the floor of this fiscal crisis, I pointed out that our national debt was \$9.4 trillion, and the per capita debt, each American's share of the national debt was \$31,000, up from \$20,000 in 1999.

This year, that figure will reach \$41,000. Let's put that into perspective. In 2009, according to the Bureau of

Labor Statistics, the median income for an Ohio family in 2007 for one earner was \$40,000. That means each person's share of the national debt is more than many hard-working Ohioans make in an entire year.

Alarming, these figures did not even count our accumulated long-term financial obligations: Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, which grew \$2.5 trillion last year as a result of the increases in the costs of Medicare and Social Security benefits.

The baby boomers are here. They are coming on. If we include those numbers, taxpayers are on the hook for a record \$57 trillion in Federal liabilities to cover the lifetime benefits of everyone eligible for Medicare, Social Security, and other Government programs. That is nearly \$500,000 per household.

Now, it does not take an economist to realize that of course we cannot keep going. As our former Comptroller General and head of the Government Accountability Office said, we are facing a fiscal timebomb. We must come to terms with the fact that the U.S. Government is the worst credit card abuser in the world, and it is time that we came to terms with the fiscal realities of 2009.

We cannot continue to heap debt on the backs of our children and grandchildren without a second thought. Lip service from Congress and the administration is not going to get the job done. Recently, the Office of Management and Budget Director, Peter Orszag, spoke to a group of bipartisan Senators who have breakfast regularly to talk about some of the problems.

He pointed out that as we are confronted with the economic tsunami hitting our country, we are lucky our interest rates are very low, because many investors in America and around the world are parking their money in Treasury bills.

Mr. Orszag continued on to say, we cannot expect that rate of borrowing to last, and it is imperative we take advantage of this phenomena now before foreign markets and our people demand more interest for their investment in the U.S. debt.

I could not agree more. We cannot rely on luck and foreign investors. When I met with Larry Summers, Martin Feldstein, and Larry Lindsay, they say our current fiscal path is only sustainable—listen to this—as long as the Japanese, the Chinese, and the OPEC and others have confidence that we are going to pay back our debt. And, boy, are they watching whether we are going to do anything about tax reform and entitlement reform.

Now, this has serious implications. Foreign creditors have provided more than 70 percent of the funds that the United States has borrowed since 2001—70 percent.

Today 50 percent, 51 percent of the privately owned national debt is held by foreigners. That is up from 37 percent just 6 years ago. If these foreign investors lose confidence and pull out

of U.S. Treasuries, Katey bar the door. Borrowing hundreds of billions of dollars from China and OPEC nations not only puts our economy but our national security at risk. We have to make sure other countries do not control our debt.

One of the things I pointed out—and the Presiding Officer understands this—is that we have to become more oil independent. We have a situation today where somebody else controls the supply, the cost, and they are buying our debt. If I control the supply and the cost and then I am paying for your debt, I put you out of business. That is just a fact of life. We have to wake up to the fact that we cannot rely on these other countries to take care of this debt. We cannot continue to live in the United States of denial.

In 2006, I sent a letter to President Bush urging him to take on comprehensive tax and entitlement reform. I ask unanimous consent to have that letter printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, December 4, 2006.

The PRESIDENT,
The White House,
Washington, DC.

DEAR PRESIDENT BUSH: I am respectfully writing to encourage you to take the lead on pursuing fundamental tax reform as we begin the 110th Congress in January. You have an historic opportunity, through fundamental tax reform, to transform the U.S. economy in a manner that will make our nation stronger and more prosperous for generations. In so doing, you will cement your domestic policy legacy, I urge you to carry the banner of tax reform.

In 1984, President Ronald Reagan declared to the American people that the tax code was fundamentally unfair, and that he was going to reform it. President Reagan held his belief in the unjustness of the tax code deep in his heart. He knew that hundreds of targeted tax subsidies for the benefit of powerful interests forced average Americans to pay higher marginal rates and reduced economic growth. He saw tax reform not as a retreat from his 1981 tax relief agenda, but rather as a logical continuation and enhancement of that agenda. The Tax Reform Act of 1986 was the culmination of the quest he began in 1981, to create a tax code with low marginal rates that raised the necessary revenue to fund the government with the least possible interference in our free market economy.

Likewise, fundamental tax reform that makes the tax code simple, fair, and pro-growth could serve as the third and final phase of the project you began in 2001 and continued in 2003. You do not have to choose between making the 2001 and 2003 tax relief permanent and reforming the tax code. The latter idea is a complement to, not a competitor with, the former idea. We live in a 21st century global economy, but we suffer from a tax code designed for the 20th century. Small businesses—the engines of job creation—are overwhelmed by complexity. In many cases, neighborhood businesses are forced to comply with the same convoluted rules as multinational corporations. Our international tax rules were designed in an era when the United States accounted for 50 percent of global economic output, and we had no worries about other countries competing with us for jobs and capital. Now we

live in the most competitive global economy we have known. We have redesigned social programs as targeted tax breaks with complex eligibility criteria and restrictions, completely baffling ordinary families who cannot obtain the benefits of these provisions because they are too complicated to understand.

Mr. President, you and I have been advocates for tax reform for years. In 2003, I attached an amendment to the Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act that would have created a blue ribbon commission to study fundamental tax reform. The amendment was adopted by voice vote, but later was removed in conference committee. At the 2004 Republican National Convention, you announced that fundamental tax reform would become a top domestic priority. I remember sitting in the front of the audience with the Ohio delegation when you made the announcement, and I leapt to my feet to applaud you. A couple of days later while campaigning in Ohio, you told the audience that when I rose to applaud you, you thought I was going to jump up on stage and hug you.

It seemed that the tax reform bandwagon finally had started to roll. In the autumn of 2004, I offered my tax reform commission amendment again, this time to the American Jobs Creation Act. The Senate again adopted my amendment. During conference negotiations, the White House contacted me and requested that I withdraw my amendment because you were preparing to take a leadership role by appointing your own tax reform panel. I enthusiastically agreed to defer to your leadership, and I withdrew my amendment. In January 2005, you announced the creation of an all-star panel, led by former Senators Connie Mack and John Breaux, and that panel spent most of the year engaging the American public to develop proposals to make our tax code simpler, fairer, and more conducive to economic growth. In November 2005, the panel issued its final report. While not perfect in anyone's mind, the panel's two plans provided a starting point for developing tax reform legislation that would represent a huge improvement over the current system. The panel's proposals belong as a key part of the national discussion on fundamental tax reform.

Yet, momentum for tax reform seems to have slowed in the more than one year since the panel submitted its report to the Treasury Department. Initially, you indicated that upon receipt of the panel's report, the Treasury Department would analyze the proposals and then provide you with its own recommendations. These recommendations would serve as the basis for legislative action. In the meantime, however, your administration and the Congress have faced other immediate priorities—from Social Security solvency to the global war on terror to relief for victims of Hurricane Katrina. As a result, we missed an opportunity to address fundamental tax reform during the 109th Congress. And now, time is running short. Your 2007 State of the Union address provides an excellent opportunity to take up a cause that will lead you to being remembered as the president who made the tax code simple, fair, and pro-growth.

I have discussed fundamental tax reform with OMB Director Rob Portman, Secretary Hank Paulson, and Chief of Staff Josh Bolten. Mr. President you have a great team that, working with you and Congress, can get the job done. I also sense responsiveness in Congress for tax reform. Congressman Frank Wolf and I have introduced the SAFE Commission Act, which would require consideration of tax reform and entitlement reform, in the House and Senate. Senator Bob Bennett has been putting together a Senate working group on tax reform (in which I am

actively participating), and other senators have expressed interest in working with us. For example, Senator Ron Wyden, who has introduced his own tax reform legislation, has shown tremendous enthusiasm for organizing a bipartisan Senate effort on tax reform.

The American people are ready for tax reform. Unlike Social Security, no one defends the current tax code. Without your leadership, however, the incoming congressional majority likely will propose their own version of "reform"—but you and I both know it will not be true reform. They will provide new middle class tax breaks and pay for them by raising marginal tax rates on high-income taxpayers and businesses. They will challenge congressional Republicans to vote against these class warfare proposals and they will challenge you to veto them. Raising marginal tax rates on an already-broken tax system will only serve to reduce U.S. competitiveness in the global economy, and ultimately will prove self-defeating. Instead, Republicans and Democrats must work together to reform the tax code in a manner that will raise sufficient revenues to fund important national priorities, while providing an environment conducive to innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic growth.

The time to act is now. Twenty years after Ronald Reagan reformed the tax code, he still is remembered fondly as the leader who set the stage for years of prosperity at the end of the 20th century. Working on a bipartisan basis, you have an opportunity to accomplish a similar achievement for the 21st century—a lasting legacy for your fellow Americans. I urge you not to pass up this once-in-a-lifetime chance, and if you take up the challenge, I will be your faithful ally.

Sincerely,

GEORGE V. VOINOVICH,
United States Senator.

Mr. VOINOVICH. Sadly, no action was taken. We missed a gigantic opportunity to make meaningful reform while times were relatively good. We are more or less lucking out now, but we cannot count on that luck to last forever. We have to tackle tax and entitlement reform to maintain credibility, to turn around our economy, and to regain our global respectability—not a year from now, not 2 years from now, but now, now, now.

Our Tax Code, for example, is imploding from the hundreds of economic and social policies Congress pursues through tax incentives and dozens of temporary tax provisions. It is a nightmare. Just ask the millions of Americans right now who are filing their tax returns. I have said this on the floor before: When we got our tax return back last year, my wife and I looked at it. My wife said: Do you understand it?

I said: No, I don't understand it.

I said: Why don't we call our accountant; maybe he will explain it.

She said: Don't you dare. He will charge us \$500.

It is out of control. For anybody who understands what is going on, it is a nightmare.

Tinkering with the Tax Code won't work. The argument I made to President Bush several times was that we know the reduction in marginal rates is going to evaporate. We know the capital gains reduction is going to evaporate in 2010. We know the reduc-

tion in taxes on dividends is going to evaporate in 2010. Why don't we take this opportunity to look at tax reform and look at those things that are going to encourage people to save and keep the economy going?

Frankly, those three things might be wonderful in that regard. But you can't have it unless you make it up with some other taxes that are the least hurtful to savings and the economy.

Since the last major tax reform in 1986, we have added over 15,000 new provisions in the Internal Revenue Code. Last year alone, we passed 500 changes in the Tax Code. It is no wonder why only 13 percent of Americans file their taxes without the help of either a tax preparer or computer software. Clearly, we have waited too long to act. This is not just a matter of saving taxpayers' time and effort, it is also about saving real money.

The Tax Foundation calculates conservatively that we all spend about \$265 billion a year to keep track of our records and pay people to pay our taxes. If we could streamline it and make it simple and understandable, if we could only cut that in half, that would be a gigantic tax reduction for the American people and not cost us one dime.

We must enact fundamental tax reform to help make the Tax Code simpler, fairer, transparent, and economically efficient.

Thankfully, there have been some encouraging signs of new developments. Earlier this month, I attended a bipartisan press conference along with Senator CONRAD, Representatives COOPER and WOLF, and former U.S. Comptroller General Walker who now heads up the Peter G. Peterson Foundation. David Walker and the rest of us urged Congress to take action to restore fiscal discipline. In other words, we all said: This has to be done. We agreed it is time to begin to enact the first pillar of meaningful comprehensive tax and entitlement reform. That is why I am disappointed that President Obama did not mention a vehicle to enact tax and entitlement reform in his address to Congress, just as I was very disappointed that the Bush administration never once mentioned reducing our national debt after 2001.

I am a Republican. He was a Republican President. Our President never, ever mentioned the national debt all the time he was President. It was like it didn't exist. Yet the debt kept going up, up, up, and up. I have been calling for the creation of a commission to facilitate tax and entitlement reform for some time. In fact, back in 2006, I introduced the Securing America's Future Economy or SAFE Commission Act, which I reintroduced in the Senate in the 109th and 110th Congresses.

Congressman JIM COOPER of Tennessee and Congressman FRANK Wolf of Virginia introduced a version in the House that enlisted 93 cosponsors from both parties. This bipartisan, bicameral group had the support from

corporate executives, religious leaders, and think tanks across the political spectrum—the conservative Heritage Foundation and the liberal Brookings Institute. All of these people realize where we are.

Building on the SAFE Commission, two of my colleagues, the Budget Committee chairman from North Dakota, Senator CONRAD, and ranking member from New Hampshire, Senator GREGG, introduced a bipartisan bill that would create a tax and entitlement reform task force very similar to the SAFE Commission called the Bipartisan Task Force for Responsible Fiscal Action. I signed on as 1 of 19 cosponsors. We will never, ever take the necessary steps toward fiscal responsibility unless we create this BRAC-like, bipartisan commission.

The commission would take on the tough issues of Social Security, health care, and tax reform, and create recommendations that would be fast-tracked through a special process and brought to the floor of both Chambers for a vote. In other words, to do it the traditional way we do things around here it will never, ever get done. If you think we would have been able to close airbases and other bases around the country by doing it through legislation without the BRAC process, you are not in the real world.

If we really want to tackle this stuff, we have to get a group together. We have to work on it and come up with a compromise. If three quarters agree, it is the thing to do. We put it through an expedited procedure. The Senate gets it; the House gets it. They have to vote up or down.

It is important that that happen because it will have legislators on it. I know if somebody asked you to spend a year and a half of your life putting something together and then said: Well, once it is done, it will go through the regular procedure, you would say: Goodbye. I don't have time for that.

But if you knew you put the time in and that if you had three quarters who agreed on it and the thing was going to get some action, then you would have some incentive to say: I will stay at the table, work on this, and we will get the job done.

The workload would be heavy, and the commission could certainly benefit by taking a look at previous work that has been done to study these issues by foundations and others. It also could start by considering some of the previous proposals that have been introduced by some of our former colleagues, Senators Mack and Breaux, cochairs of the commission created by the Bush administration to reform our Tax Code.

I worked like the dickens to say: Let's have this commission to study the Tax Code. I will never forget talking to Karl Rove.

I said: I want it to be legislated. That is the way we had it in the appropriations bill.

He said: No, we will do it with something else. We will put Breaux and

Mack in charge. I think he said at that time he was afraid that PELOSI and STENY HOYER might kill it in the beginning.

I said: If they are going to kill it in the beginning, let's find out. He said: No, we want the other direction. So Connie Mack and John Breaux worked their tails off for over a year. They came back with a very good report. It wasn't perfect, but I expected President Bush to take that and tweak it and send it over here.

I will never forget the story John Breaux told me. He went to visit with President Bush. He walked in the Oval Office and he started looking around. The President said to him: John, what are you doing?

And he said: Mr. President, I am looking for the report that we did.

On the shelf, gathering dust.

That is why I was pleased to hear President Obama mention the national debt in his address to Congress. But I was disappointed that when he mentioned the "crushing cost" we face and the reform we can no longer afford to put on hold, he only talked about health care. Although health care costs are a big part of our entitlement problem, addressing health care reform alone will not get the job done.

It is not the time for dodging and ducking. This is the time for the cold hard truth. Everyone knows we need tax and entitlement reform. I know it, the Obama administration knows it, and the American people know it. And I know for sure Peter Orszag does because a couple years ago, he was as enthusiastic about dealing with this problem as anybody in this country.

The American people elected President Obama to make the tough decisions to put this country back on the right track. As President Obama said himself so eloquently:

We must take responsibility for our future, and for posterity.

I love that. I love that part of his speech. I thought it was just great. He cares about me. He cares about my children. He cares about my grandchildren. "We must take responsibility for our future, and for posterity." Sadly, so far he is missing in action on tax and entitlement reform. In fact, in a February 27 column in the Washington Post, Michael Gerson called the President's stance on tax and entitlement reform in his joint address to Congress "timid" and "hardly courageous."

Now, in fairness to our President, he and his administration have been busy putting out fires. This President has more on his plate than maybe any President we have ever had, maybe since Franklin Delano Roosevelt. But if he ignores comprehensive tax and entitlement reform, we could see an economic holocaust.

That is why I would suggest to my fellow colleagues who have voiced similar calls for reform that we should gather our staffs, on a bipartisan and bicameral basis, to agree on the lan-

guage of a vehicle commission that can get the job done—in other words, getting Republicans and Democrats, House and Senate, to get the language of what this commission should look like. We will work on that. If the administration does not like our proposals, then they would be free to weigh in with their own ideas. But doing nothing simply is not an option. I have talked to Senator GREGG about this, Senator CONRAD. And I said it is our duty to position this Nation so we have the greatest opportunity for success for the future.

I am saying, if the President does not want to do this, let's us get together and help him. OK. Let's get together. Let's help him and then say: Here, Mr. President, here is something agreed to on a bipartisan basis. We would like to go with it. If you have a better idea on how to get it done, amen and hallelujah, but we have to get going.

Each and every one of us should be able to look into the eyes of our children and grandchildren and know in our hearts we have done all we can to make sure that at least they have the same opportunity we have had for our standard of living and quality of life.

If I had to name one of the primary contributing factors to our worsening economic situation, it would have to be the loss of faith we seem to have experienced in ourselves. In many ways, today America is mired in a crisis of confidence.

I do not share the despair many experts hold concerning the future of our country. When I first became mayor of Cleveland in 1979, the city was in default on its bonds. Unemployment for the first couple of years continued to grow to more than 18 percent. Think of that: 18 percent. Cynics at the time joked, saying: Will the last person leaving Cleveland turn out the lights.

We decided that no one was going to come to Cleveland and solve our problems for us. We had the courage to be more self-reliant and make tough decisions. Through the public-private partnerships we created, we were able to unite everyone behind common goals. We empowered the community, and it worked. In fact, at that time, Cleveland was known as the "comeback city."

I say to the Presiding Officer, I know you could identify with this. Cleveland was named an All America City three times in a 5-year period. It never happened before, and I suspect it will never happen again. It was that public-private partnership, everybody coming together. Our motto was: Together we can do it.

Similarly, when I became Governor of Ohio in 1991, we faced a \$1½ billion budget shortfall, and we were a no-growth State. We made some tough decisions. As I mentioned earlier, I had to cut the budget four times and raise taxes. But, as a result, we were able to turn the tide, create 540,000 new jobs—in fact, manufacturing grew for the first time in 25 years—and the State's

rainy-day fund grew from 14 cents to over \$1 billion. And we put \$200 million aside to take care of any Medicaid problem we would have.

Mr. President, I know we can turn things around again. We really can. But we need to stop the spending spree and start making tough decisions on this tax and entitlement reform. Why don't we work together to get America back on track? Let's work together to systematically deal with each of the problems, challenges, and opportunities we have in America, so we are filled with the same hope and optimism of Ronald Reagan. I got to know Ronald Reagan. He was quite a guy, quite a President. He always had a positive attitude, and he said:

I know that for America, there will always be a bright dawn ahead.

Mr. President, the glass is not half empty, the glass is half full. If all of us work together, we can turn this thing around.

I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

REVOLUTIONARY WAR AND WAR OF 1812 BATTLEFIELD PROTECTION ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 27, H.R. 146.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is debatable.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been filed pursuant

to rule XXII, the clerk will report the motion.

The 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. 27, H.R. 146, the Revolutionary War and War of 1812 Battlefield Protection Act.

Harry Reid, Patty Murray, Benjamin L. Cardin, Kay R. Hagan, Byron L. Dorgan, Richard Durbin, Carl Levin, Jeanne Shaheen, John F. Kerry, Frank R. Lautenberg, Jeff Bingaman, Roland W. Burris, Robert Menendez, Amy Klobuchar, Jim Webb, Jack Reed, Bill Nelson.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum be waived.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the vote on the motion to invoke cloture occur at 5:30 Monday, March 16; further, that if cloture is invoked, then the postcloture time count as if cloture had been invoked at 10 a.m. on Monday, March 16; and that during any recess or adjournment period, postcloture time continue to run.

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

ORDERS FOR MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2009

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 2 p.m. Monday, March 16; that following the prayer and the pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the morning hour be deemed to have expired, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; that the Senate proceed to period of morning business until 3 p.m., with Senators permitted

to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each; that following morning business, the Senate resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 146, the legislative vehicle for the omnibus lands bill.

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

PROGRAM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the next rollcall vote will occur on Monday at 5:30 p.m. This vote will be on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to H.R. 146.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2009, AT 2 P.M.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 6:58 p.m., adjourned until Monday, March 16, 2009, at 2 p.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

THOMAS L. STRICKLAND, OF COLORADO, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE, VICE R. LYLE LAVERTY.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

ALEXANDER VERSHBOW, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, VICE MARY BETH LONG, RESIGNED.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate, Thursday, March 12, 2009:

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

DAVID W. OGDEN, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL.
THOMAS JOHN PERRELLI, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY GENERAL.