

So this amendment would have improved the bill. And I have it right here in my hands. It is really very simple. Section 121, "Subtitle C—Other Health Care Matters"—that is what is underneath—"REQUIREMENT TO PROVIDE CARE UNDER VETERANS COMMUNITY CARE PROGRAM FOR TOXIC-EXPOSED VETERANS." And then it goes through, it strikes an "or," inserts a semicolon, strikes the period at the end of the sentence and inserting "or" and adds "the covered veteran is a toxic-exposed veteran."

Pretty specific. It elevates the care that they need so that they do not have to wait because they have waited long enough. And they don't want to have to wait until the VA hires enough people to do this. Right now, if the VA is going to hire new nurses or doctors, do you know how long it takes them to get them hired? Ninety-seven days. Do they have what they need to meet this load? No, they do not.

Now, in the private sector they can make these hires in about 16 days. And they do. And we have discussed these hiring process changes that need to be made in order to facilitate this care.

Now, some have said: Well, you know, if we allow community care, in essence, that is privatizing—privatizing—the VA. No, it is not. It is not privatizing. What it is doing is saying the VA is seeking a better way to deliver a service in a timely manner to the people who have been promised the service. That is what the amendment would do. It would allow them to avoid that bureaucratic process to take that VA card to go get the care they need that day. But, no, because we have some who are so fearful that the VA or the Federal Government might lose some of their power, some of their control over your life, they will not agree to that.

Now, the fiscal year 2021 NDAA included my K2 Veterans Toxic Exposure Accountability Act, requiring a 180-day study by DOD on toxic exposures at K2 to demonstrate more clearly the associations between exposure to toxic substances and negative health consequence experienced by K2 veterans. That is something that had a tremendous effect on many of our military men and women at Fort Campbell and there with the 160th, with the 101st.

And I have worked with Senator TILLIS on the Toxic Exposure in the Military Act, the TEAM Act, which was largely included in the PACT Act. And I worked with Senator SULLIVAN on the Veterans Burn Pits Exposure Recognition Act, which would concede exposure to a list of toxic substances, hazards, and chemicals common to burn pits for veterans who deployed to certain covered locations within certain corresponding periods.

So I thank my colleagues who have put the effort in on this. I will say that I am very disappointed that my colleagues from New York and Montana decided no amendments. Senator MORAN's amendment would have ad-

justed how that wait time is calculated to be more fair to our veterans. My amendment would have allowed them to immediately get the care they need, lifesaving care—lifesaving care. It would have allowed that immediate access. But we have chosen, it appears—or the majority leader and the chairman have chosen—to move forward without an amendment process that would be more fair and more responsive to our veterans. And at the same time, they are daring us to vote no on this bill. I would challenge them.

Take a moment and let's return to the agreed-to amendment process and improve this for the sake—for the sake—and the livelihood of many of our veterans who are experiencing the effects of toxic exposure.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### SETTING FORTH THE CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET FOR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023 AND SETTING FORTH THE APPROPRIATE BUDGETARY LEVELS FOR FISCAL YEARS 2024 THROUGH 2032—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, the United States has the largest economy in the world and also has the largest government apparatus in the world. This year, we will bring in \$4.8 trillion and will spend about \$5.8 trillion, and yet we will have no budget this year. How inexcusable, how embarrassing it is for a country—the largest country in the world, the largest government in the world, the largest bureaucracy in the world—to have no budget. Is it any wonder that we are \$30 trillion in debt?

Most small businesses have a budget. Most businesses in our country have a budget and a prediction for what will come in and what will go out for the year, and this year there will be no budget. Not only will there be no Democratic presentation about it, there will be no Republican presentation as a party.

So today I will introduce my budget. This is a budget that balances in 5 years. The reason we chose 5 years is that the constitutional amendment to the budget amendment—the constitutional amendment that would balance the budget—balances in 5 years. We voted on that amendment previously in this body, and the Democrats, in unison, opposed it. They were opposed to a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. The Republicans were unanimous in voting for the balanced budget amendment, constitutional amendment. In that amendment, the

text of it would balance the budget in 5 years. So you would think, if all 50 Republicans are on record as being for a balanced budget amendment that balances in 5 years, that all 50 Republicans would be for a balanced budget, a budget that actually balances in 5 years.

Now, why is it important to have a budget? Well, you ought to have a blueprint or a plan for what your government is going to do, so it is inexcusable not to have any budget at all.

But also we have another problem that we are facing in our country: We are facing the problem of inflation. Every American is seeing it. You are seeing your gas prices go through the roof. You are seeing your prices at the grocery store going through the roof.

Why do we have inflation? Well, inflation comes from debt. When the United States runs up a debt, it is sold. Foreign countries buy the debt, Americans buy the debt, but the biggest purchaser of our debt is the Federal Reserve.

When the Federal Reserve buys the debt, do they buy it with money that they have sort of laying around? Do you go to the Federal Reserve, and some guy opens a big safe, and here is the money to buy the debt? No. The Federal Reserve doesn't have any money, so the Federal Reserve simply prints up the money and buys the American debt. But what does that mean? When the Federal Reserve prints the money to buy the debt, this floods the system with money. So we are flooded with money right now. In the last 2 years, we borrowed \$6 trillion, so \$6 trillion is entered into the system.

When you look at the amount of money that is being created, there is a measurement of money supply called the M2. If you look at it on an annualized basis, it has been going up at 15 percent a year.

So inflation is an increase in the money supply. It is an increase in the money supply because they are buying the debt. So it is all related to spending.

It is inexcusable that we will have no budget this year. It is inexcusable that the projection is for a trillion-dollar deficit in 1 year and yet there won't even be a budget plan. There will be no plan to try to make the deficit less or to try to manage our money.

But with this debt comes inflation. We are suffering from the worst inflation we have had in 40 years. Who suffers the most from inflation? The working class, those who are on fixed income, those who are retired, they are getting creamed by this. People are spending over \$100 filling up their gas tank now. This is a real problem.

So a balanced budget is not an academic exercise. It is not something that is theoretical. Our deficit has real impacts. Our deficit is leading to inflation. So what I have proposed for the last several years is a balanced budget, a budget that balances gradually over 5 years by having across-the-board cuts.

When I started introducing this budget several years ago, you could simply freeze spending, and if you froze spending, we would grow out of the deficit. By 5 years, by not increasing spending, you would have a balanced budget. That was rejected by all the Democrats and about half of the Republicans.

So then we went another year or two, and spending increased. As spending increased and got worse, a freeze would no longer balance the budget in 5 years, so we introduced the Penny Plan. The Penny Plan was to cut 1 percent a year for 5 years, and it would balance. But still the Congress ignored my admonition on this, and the spending got worse.

In the last couple of years, it has had to have been increased by a two-penny plan, meaning a 2-percent reduction in spending each year for 5 years would still lead to balance in 5 years. But Congress once again has ignored that.

So last year when we introduced the 5-year plan to balance the budget, it was called the Five Penny Plan. You had to reduce spending by 5 percent each year for 5 years.

This year, it has gotten even worse. The \$6 trillion spending spree of the last 2 years when they locked down the economy and basically bankrupted almost every business in the country—when that occurred, there was massive spending, massive debts, and now, this year, in order to balance the budget, it would take a 6-percent cut.

But I would like to put this in perspective. If you ask people in Washington, their heads explode because they could never conceive of ever reducing spending. In fact, spending hasn't gone down really ever in real terms in recent history because the government grows and grows and grows. Your economy may shrink, your income may shrink, you may be unemployed, but the government gets bigger and bigger and bigger.

So if we want to tame government, if we want to get government to live within its means, if we want government to balance its budget, it would take some work. People in Washington seem to think, oh, it could never happen, but if you talk to a business man or woman who has ever been through a recession or ever been through tough times, they will tell you that sometimes a business has to reduce by 10 percent, 20 percent, 30 percent, to live within their means.

What we are calling for here is not no government. We are not even calling for a minimal government. What we are calling for is a government that lives within its means. Right now, living within its means would be a government that brings in \$4.8 trillion, which is how much tax revenue comes in, would spend \$4.8 trillion. So still the vast majority of things the government does, it could still continue to do, but it would have to spend less. We would have to have real restraint in spending.

The best way to perceive it is this: Imagine the thing that you want from

government that you think is so popular, nobody could touch. Let's take for example research for cancer or research for Alzheimer's disease, something that so many people advocate, so many people are emotionally charged with.

Well, when people come to Washington and they ask me about "I have this" or "My parents have this, and I want research money to go to this," what I typically will say to them is "You know we are out of money. You know that we have this massive deficit, and it has led to this great inflation that is across the land. What if we told everybody that they had to have a little bit less?" They look at me and they say "Well, what would that mean?" and I say "Well, let's say that your research project—the cancer research or the Alzheimer's research—got \$100 million last year. In order for all of us to tighten our belt, in order for all of us to balance the budget so we can be stronger, in order to tame the inflation that is eating us alive, you would get \$94 million next year."

So we are not talking about sort of eliminating whole facets of government; what we are talking about is everybody would have to deal with less.

There is so much waste throughout government. You look at the National Science Foundation. The National Science Foundation is one of the most wasteful Agencies in government.

You go back 50 years, and you look at William Proxmire. In the early 1970s, William Proxmire began giving an award called the Golden Fleece Award. What he would give an award for was wasteful spending, and almost always, it came to the National Science Foundation. One of the first ones he gave an award for was \$50,000 to discover what makes people fall in love. He just thought it was ridiculous that we would be spending money on that, and I agree. But it didn't get better; it got worse.

The National Science Foundation has never had a reduction in its money. It always gets more money. This year—and this is why this is a bipartisan problem—the Republicans and Democrats got together, and we nearly doubled the income or nearly doubled the appropriations for the National Science Foundation.

What are some other kinds of great research coming out of this organization?

Well, they did a study to see whether or not selfies make you happy. So if you take a selfie of yourself smiling and then look at it later in the day, does that make you feel better about yourself? That would cost a little over a million dollars.

They did a study also on the mating call of male Panamanian frogs. They said: Well, we want to know whether the country frogs have a different mating call than the city frogs. As someone who comes from the country, I can tell you there is a different mating call in the country than there is in the city.

But that cost us about half-a-million dollars.

Another study was \$2 million to find out if the person in front of you sneezes on the food in the cafeteria, are you more or less likely to take that food?

Another study was three-quarters of a million dollars, studying whether or not Japanese quail, on cocaine—whether or not they are more sexually promiscuous when they use cocaine.

I mean, the studies go on endlessly.

So what did Congress do? Instead of telling them: Why don't we give them one penny less; why don't we give them 99 percent of their budget, or this year why don't we give them 94 percent of the budget, instead we gave them 200 percent of their budget. Do you think the National Science Foundation is going to be more frugal now that we have nearly doubled their budget?

But this is the kind of great ideas that are coming out of Congress, and this one turned out to be a bipartisan idea. All of the Democrats and half the Republicans voted to nearly double the size of the National Science Foundation. So you will get more waste, more abuse, and more debt.

The thing is, we bring in a lot of money. We bring in \$4.8 trillion. Could we not simply spend what comes in? Part of the problem also is most of the bills are not read. Most of the appropriations bills come in here at the last moment, are 2,000 pages, and no one gets to read them until hours beforehand.

And so what they do is they have renewed programs year after year. There is a process up here where we authorize spending. So one committee is supposed to say, is the spending working, and then the other committee appropriates the money. We don't even bother to reauthorize these things. We just keep reappropriating the money year after year.

Someone will have this great idea and say, well, we need to do something about homelessness, and everybody will say, well, that is such a well-meaning—they intend to do it, and they will do it. But nobody looks up the fact that we already have 80 other programs doing the same thing.

Nobody ever looks at whether the program is working. Nobody ever figures out whether anything that we are spending on money is viable and doing us any good, and so it just adds up.

People come and say: Oh, well, this is something we have to do. We have to send \$40 billion to Ukraine. Where does it come from? If you really think it is such a great idea, why don't we have a Ukraine war tax? Why don't we do \$500 per taxpayer, and you would have enough for Ukraine. No, they just want to add it on the tab.

But it is worse than that. It is so irresponsible that the party in charge will produce no budget. So we have nearly \$5 trillion coming in; nearly \$6 trillion going out the door, and there will be no budget. It is inexcusable.

We have the largest economy in the world. We have the largest government

in the world, and we will have no budget this year. So what I have done and will continue to do is to produce a budget that balances in 5 years; this is consistent with the balanced budget amendment to the Constitution.

And the other reason we do 5 years is that some people have come forward in the past and said that we will balance it in 10. It becomes so long and unbelievable with the cuts in years 9 and 10 that they never happen; that it really hasn't become a good document even when budgets are put forward.

I think if we were to balance our budget, I think we would be a stronger Nation. It is the way we would combat inflation. If you see the people representing the party in power, the Democrats, you see them on TV, they are scratching their heads; they have no idea. They are like we have tried everything. But they don't even understand the problem. They have no idea where inflation is coming from.

Inflation comes from debt. When the Federal Reserve buys the debt, that creates the inflation. Because the Federal Reserve has no money, the money is printed up, and the money floods the system.

But it is also part of a bait and switch. These are people who run for office and say: We will bring you free things. We will bring you baubles. We will bring you manna. We will give you free stuff. We all instinctively know that nothing in life is really free.

So the free stuff that they are going to bring to you is paid for through inflation.

So we have to get away from this. We have to get to the point where we say that we are smarter than this. When a politician calls you up and says: Give me your Social Security number and I will send you a thousand dollars, that is what this is. It is an internet scam. It is a phone scam.

They are asking for your vote by saying: We are going to give you free stuff. There is no free lunch. There is nothing in life that you will get without working. But what we have done is political parties and politicians—sometimes in both parties—offer free stuff to people. But right now we are paying the penalty. We are paying the piper. We are paying the inflation tax.

And the inflation tax is a tax because we have overspent. Inflation will continue to get worse until we begin to reduce the debt. You have got to quit digging the hole. We have this massive hole of debt, and we have to quit digging the hole deeper. So this budget will be a budget that balances in 5 years, and I recommend a "yes" vote.

#### MOTION TO PROCEED

And with that, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 397, S. Con. Res. 41.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. SMITH). The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 397, S. Con. Res. 41, a concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United

States Government for fiscal year 2023 and setting forth the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2024 through 2032.

#### VOTE ON MOTION

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

Mr. PAUL. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY), and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER).

The result was announced—yeas 29, nays 67, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 228 Leg.]

#### YEAS—29

Barrasso	Grassley	Marshall
Blackburn	Hagerty	Paul
Braun	Hawley	Risch
Cassidy	Hoeven	Romney
Cotton	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Cramer	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Crapo	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cruz	Lankford	Sullivan
Ernst	Lee	Tuberville
Fischer	Lummis	

#### NAYS—67

Baldwin	Heinrich	Rosen
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Rounds
Blumenthal	Hirono	Sanders
Blunt	Inhofe	Sasse
Booker	Kaine	Schatz
Boozman	Kelly	Schumer
Brown	King	Shaheen
Burr	Klobuchar	Shelby
Cantwell	Leahy	Sinema
Capito	Lujan	Smith
Cardin	Manchin	Stabenow
Carper	Markey	Tester
Casey	McConnell	Thune
Collins	Menendez	Tillis
Cooms	Merkley	Van Hollen
Cornyn	Murkowski	Warner
Cortez Masto	Murphy	Warnock
Duckworth	Murray	Warren
Durbin	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Padilla	Wyden
Gillibrand	Peters	Young
Graham	Portman	
Hassan	Reed	

#### NOT VOTING—4

Daines	Toomey
Moran	Wicker

The motion was rejected.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSSOFF). Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Alan M. Leventhal, of Massachusetts, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Denmark.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be 10 minutes of debate, equally divided, on the nomination.

Mr. CARDIN. I ask unanimous consent that all time be yielded back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, all time is yielded back.

#### VOTE ON LEVENTHAL NOMINATION

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Leventhal nomination?

Mr. HEINRICH. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY) and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER).

The result was announced—yeas 63, nays 32, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 229 Ex.]

#### YEAS—63

Baldwin	Graham	Peters
Bennet	Hassan	Portman
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Reed
Blunt	Hickenlooper	Risch
Booker	Hirono	Romney
Brown	Kaine	Rosen
Burr	Kelly	Rounds
Cantwell	Kennedy	Sanders
Cardin	King	Schatz
Carper	Klobuchar	Schumer
Casey	Leahy	Shaheen
Cassidy	Lujan	Sinema
Collins	Manchin	Smith
Cooms	Markey	Stabenow
Cornyn	McConnell	Tester
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Van Hollen
Crapo	Merkley	Warner
Duckworth	Murphy	Warnock
Durbin	Murray	Warren
Feinstein	Ossoff	Wyden
Gillibrand	Padilla	Young

#### NAYS—32

Barrasso	Hagerty	Paul
Blackburn	Hawley	Rubio
Boozman	Hoeven	Sasse
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Scott (FL)
Capito	Inhofe	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Johnson	Shelby
Cramer	Lankford	Sullivan
Cruz	Lee	Thune
Ernst	Lummis	Tillis
Fischer	Marshall	Tuberville
Grassley	Murkowski	

#### NOT VOTING—5

Daines	Toomey	Wicker
Moran	Whitehouse	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table. The President will be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session. The Senator from Arizona.