

Mr. President, next week, the Senate will, for the first time in over four years, debate a budget resolution on the Senate floor. While I have many qualms with the substance of the budget we'll be debating, I have to say that, in terms of the process, this is a welcome development.

The American people have waited too long for the Senate to fulfill its basic legal obligation to produce a budget every year.

Yesterday, with the release of the Democrats' budget plan, that delay officially came to an end.

Of course, now that I've had a chance to look over that budget, my praise for it ends there.

The budget we'll be debating next week is, to put it bluntly, a cynical political document. It is not designed to address our nation's pressing fiscal challenges, but, rather, it is designed to please the Democratic base and provide a fresh supply of political talking points.

Rather than addressing our government's spending problems and our runaway entitlements, the Democratic budget contains yet more wasteful spending.

And, in order to pay for that spending, the budget contains what could be around \$1.5 trillion in tax hikes, much of which will necessarily impact the middle class and small businesses.

It would hijack the bipartisan tax reform efforts currently underway in both the House and Senate by instructing the Senate Finance Committee to abandon these efforts in order to scour the tax code for additional revenues to the tune of nearly a trillion dollars.

In addition to the reconciliation instructions, the budget includes potentially half a trillion in additional tax hikes in order to replace the sequester and to offset more stimulus spending.

Even with all these new revenues in place, the Democratic budget does not balance, not at any point.

Under this budget, the government would still be spending more than it takes in at the end of the 10-year budget window. And, by the end of it all, our national debt would be over \$24 trillion, an increase of more than \$7 trillion, with no relief in sight.

Gross debt relative to the size of our economy never dips below 94 percent in this budget.

As the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office warns, when the debt is that high, we as a nation have less flexibility to respond to unexpected challenges. CBO also warns that when the debt is that high, there is increased risk of a fiscal crisis and soaring interest rates.

And, Mr. President, make no mistake: If interest rates rise even slightly more than assumed in this budget, federal spending on interest payments would increase substantially, moving us even closer to a fiscal crisis.

Mr. President, one of the most disappointing and disheartening parts of the budget produced by the majority in the Budget Committee is that it makes no attempt whatsoever to address entitlement spending. Instead, it would keep programs like Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security on autopilot, making it far more difficult to preserve them for future generations.

Let's just take a look at the numbers, because they are astounding.

Over the next ten years, we will spend \$6.8 trillion on Medicare, \$5.9 trillion on Medicaid, and \$11.2 trillion on Social Security for a combined total \$24 trillion.

The Democratic budget would reduce that spending by only \$56 billion over 10 years, which amounts to a minuscule 0.2 percent deduction—that's right, zero point two percent.

Let's put that number in perspective.

Despite the acknowledgement of the administration, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, and any sane analyst of the federal budget that entitlement spending is unsustainable, the Democratic budget proposes to do next to nothing about it.

Rather, they settle for spending reductions over a 10 year period that amount to about five days' worth of federal spending.

This lack of attention to entitlements sends a clear message to younger generations. That message, unfortunately, is: We don't care that the social safety net will not be there for you.

Federal entitlement spending is the biggest driver of our debts and deficits and, absent real, structural reforms, these programs threaten to swallow up our government and take our economy down with it.

This is not rhetoric or supposition, Mr. President, these are cold, hard facts.

Yet, with their budget, the Democrats have apparently opted to ignore reality and let these programs continue on their current unsustainable trajectory.

On that trajectory, the safety net frays.

On that trajectory, disabled American workers face benefit cuts of over 20 percent in 2016.

And, on that trajectory, Trust Funds associated with the safety net become exhausted.

Mr. President, the course charted by this budget is simply irresponsible. No one serious about governing would choose to ignore entitlement spending for another 10 years.

Even President Obama, hardly a picture of bravery when it comes to taking on entitlements, has proposed as much as \$530 billion in Medicare and Social Security reforms. This budget

undercuts the President's proposals by nearly 90 percent.

So, once again, Mr. President, this budget is not about dealing with reality. It's about politics, pure and simple. Instead of working with Republicans on bipartisan solutions to our nation's problems, the Democrats have decided to reveal their campaign talking points for next year.

There are some of us here in the Senate that have been looking for opportunities to work with those on the other side to address what are, in the view of many, the defining challenges of our time.

For example, in January, I came to the floor to propose five bipartisan solutions to reform Medicare and Medicaid and asked my colleagues to work with me in this effort.

These proposals are not my ideal solutions to the problems facing these programs. Instead, they are five solid ideas that have all had bipartisan support in the recent past.

For example, I propose raising the Medicare eligibility age, something President Obama and several other Democrats have, at one time or another, supported.

I also suggest limiting Medigap plans from providing first-dollar coverage in order to prevent over-utilization of Medicare benefits. This was supported by the Simpson-Bowles Commission and was also included in the Biden-Cantor fiscal negotiations in 2011.

Another one of my proposals is to streamline cost-sharing for Medicare Part A and Part B. Like the Medigap proposal, this idea was also supported by the Simpson-Bowles Commission.

In addition, I propose introducing competitive bidding into Medicare to allow for greater competition in order to reduce costs and improve the quality of care. While some have deemed this idea controversial, President Clinton proposed a similar idea in 1999 as part of a major set of Medicare reforms.

Finally, I propose instituting per capita caps on federal Medicaid spending. This was another Democratic idea. It was first proposed by President Clinton in 1995 and, at the time, all 46 Democratic Senators signed a letter supporting this policy.

Like I said, I came to the floor in January in hopes that I could bring some of my Democratic colleagues on board with these proposals so that we could at least start a bipartisan conversation on entitlement reform.

My door and my mind remain open to my colleagues across the aisle on these ideas.

And, today, as I look at this proposed budget, it's clear that I shouldn't be looking to anyone supporting this budget to work on anything resembling a bipartisan approach. Indeed, if this budget passes as-is, without any significant changes, I may have to look outside of the Senate entirely.

That is why, earlier today, I reached out to President Obama and asked him to seriously consider my five bipartisan entitlement reforms.

The President talks a lot about grand bargains and balanced approaches. The budget unveiled yesterday is a step in the wrong direction.

I hope he will demonstrate real leadership and engage on these enormous challenges in a meaningful way.

Mr. President, the budget proposed by the Democrats on the Budget Committee is fiscally irresponsible and will be detrimental to current and future generations of American workers who depend on the social safety net and who want to see it preserved for the future.

This budget grows government, not the private economy.

This budget taxes too much and spends too much.

This budget doesn't balance today, tomorrow, or ever.

This budget keeps us at the edge of a fiscal crisis, with no flexibility to respond to future emergencies.

That being the case, this budget should be soundly rejected by anyone who cares about our nation's future and about prosperity and opportunity for America's middle class.