

These programs include Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, federal pensions, farm subsidy programs, unemployment compensation and certain welfare programs.

Without a change in policy, entitlement spending and interest on the national debt will consume almost all federal revenues in 2012—about the time David Letterman reaches retirement age.

By 2030, when Michael Jordan and Julia Roberts turn 65, federal revenues won't even cover entitlement spending.

So, there I stood in the commission's doorway, eager to reverse the tide of history with the help of the commission's Budget Shadows computer game.

Heather Lamm, a commission researcher, explained the rules.

Cut enough spending and raise enough taxes to score 100 points, and you balance the entitlement side of the budget.

In other words, you keep the deficit equal to 2.3 percent of GDP, or gross domestic product. That's the value of all goods and services in the U.S. economy.

Without big changes, the commission figures the deficit will skyrocket to 18.9 percent of GDP by 2030.

The perfect score of 100 does not balance the entire federal budget. To do that, you have to score 115. But 100 does keep the problem from getting worse.

David Modaff, the commission's computer consultant, put it a little more bluntly.

"All the screaming now (about how large the deficit is), that's your goal," he said. "To keep it at that level."

(And, I added to myself, keep Mom talking to me.)

Budget Shadows offered me 50 options in four categories:

- Health care
- Taxes
- Social Security
- Other federal entitlements

I started in health care. Spending in this part of the economy grows far faster than anything else.

After reviewing 16 options and getting confused by Medicare Part A, Medicare Part B and Medicaid, I decided to move on to a section where they speak English.

Not a great start, but I had learned something.

I needed a strategy so I would make decisions in each category based on the same logic.

First, cut spending before raising taxes.

Second, do something about COLAs—the automatic cost-of-living increases that kick up federal spending without Congress or the President ever saying yea or nay.

Third, means-test everything. In essence, if you make more than a certain amount, I decided you don't need this government program.

Leaving health care behind (just like Congress and the president last year). I charged into the non-Social Security entitlements like Medicare, unemployment and veterans' compensation benefits and started making decisions.

1. Means test non-Social Security entitlements. Score: 15 points. Only 85 to go.

2. Adjust the Consumer Price Index, the leading formula for measuring price increases, to better measure inflation for non-Social Security entitlements—10 more points. One-quarter of the way home and Mom was still talking to me.

This stuff was easy!

Next stop—either taxes or Social Security. I figured I would tax as a last resort, so on to Social Security.

3. Means test Social Security. Social Security was never intended to replace retirees' savings or be the sole source of their retirement income.

This option would keep it available as an income floor for the neediest but would also encourage others to plan better for their retirements. Nine points. That gives me 34. Cruising.

4. It's COLA time. Budget Shadows offers two options: Cancel the Social Security COLA for one year or revise the way it is calculated.

I picked the revision. Four points.

5. Gradually raise the retirement age.

Americans can now retire with full Social Security benefits for the rest of their lives at age 65. That is scheduled to change in 2000 when the retirement age will gradually rise—to age 67 by the year 2022.

I got three options here: Phase in the 67 retirement age sooner, raise it to 68 or raise it to 70. I picked age 70. Take 5 more points. At 43 points, I'm not even halfway there.

In the interest of fairness, I did pass up the chance to tax more Social Security benefits.

6. Include all new state and local government employees in Social Security.

This is too complex to explain, but it helps cash flow now and defers payments until later. Two more points. Makes the total 45.

7. Index the Social Security benefits formula for overall inflation instead of just increases in average wages. Seven points.

I passed up the chance to change the Social Security payroll tax base or raise the tax rate. They sounded too taxing.

Budget Shadows liked what I had done.

"Congratulations," it beeped at me. "You have restored Social Security to actuarial balance."

I didn't know what "actuarial balance" meant, but it sounded good.

At this point, I passed the halfway mark, and I had not increased a single tax.

"Amazing," the computer told me. "You've cut the 2030 deficit to 11 percent of GDP."

That's down from the 18.9 percent the entitlement commission thinks we're headed toward.

I liked this computer.

Now it was on to taxes. Watch my restraint.

8. Limit the home mortgage interest deduction.

Once again, two options: Kill it. (Not me.) Or reduce the maximum mortgage from \$1 million to \$300,000. (Done.) One point.

I refused to tinker with boosting the capital gains tax on estates, with curtailing itemized deductions for charitable contributions and with eliminating the tax deduction for state and local taxes.

Taxes only gave me one point, so the next choices would demand big impact.

Only one place to go. Back to health care—and catastrophe.

I discovered that somewhere along the way I had pushed buttons I had not meant to. I'd selected two options here already.

That made my first choice—means test non-Social Security entitlements—look like a 15-point hit when in fact it got me only six-tenths of a point. When I corrected everything, my score of 52 plunged to 37.

I had caused all that havoc in Social Security; Mom wouldn't talk to me, and, instead of being halfway home, I was barely one-third of the way there.

What a dumb game.

Just to be sure, I recalculated everything and my score rose to 41. "Interaction" among the choices can change things as much as 10 percent, Lamm explained. At least this 10 percent "interacted" in my favor.

More decisions. Would they never end?

9. Means-test health care benefits for Medicare. I got nine points, but "interaction" only raised my score to 47.

It was lunch time now, and I had been hunched over that computer almost three hours.

I needed bigger cuts faster, but I was running out of options.

10. Tackle Medicare Part B. This is the voluntary part of Medicare that pays for doctors' visits, lab work and outpatient hospital visits. The elderly pay a monthly premium and a \$100 deductible.

I raised the deductible to \$300 a year and indexed premiums so the enrollees' share would stay at current levels. That gave me 11 points, but "interaction" allowed only a 57 score.

I could have raised eligibility age and costs on Medicare Part A, the hospitalization part, but I figured older people need this. Were you listening, Mom?

Medicare/Medicaid outlay savings. This single option represents a blizzard of changes in the way doctors and hospitals are paid for Medicare services and also caps Medicaid payments to the states.

I had to make big savings, and this option spread for pain around. Fourteen points.

My score was 71. My bladder was full. My stomach was empty. And my bottom was sore. [No federal funds were wasted on the charts at the entitlement commission.]

I had combed all four categories of options for something acceptable—and BIG. Now I had to go back to taxes.

So far, I thought, I had placed the burden of balancing entitlement spending on those who receive the entitlements.

As a result of my choices:

Benefits paid to the elderly, the sick and the poor would rise more slowly.

Old folks would pay more of their health care costs.

My generation—the baby boomers—would retire much later in life than our parents.

Mom stopped talking to me ages ago.

I made my last decision. After this, my working wife wouldn't talk to me. My brother and sisters wouldn't talk to me. My co-workers wouldn't talk to me. And I would likely die in a driveby shooting.

But this last choice gave me 24 points and boosted my score to 95, within "interaction" reach of holding the line on the deficit.

In fact, my score chart showed the deficit would inch up to only 3 percent of GDP over the next 35 years. Instead of rising to 18.9 percent, as the commission feared.

The computer liked me. "Amazing," it said.

I was grateful someone liked me.

Starting in the year 2000, phase in over five years taxation of employer-provided health care benefits as though they were cash income.

That's right. You would pay income taxes on your health insurance if your boss buys it.

This would more accurately reflect an employer's true cost of hiring someone. It should get people thinking about health care costs and how much is paid on their behalf.

I had to do it to balance the budget. Really.

Hello. Hello? Anybody out there?

Mom?

NATIONAL SALUTE TO HOSPITALIZED VETERANS HIGHLIGHTS PT PHONE HOME PROJECT

**HON. G.V. (SONNY) MONTGOMERY**

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, February 14, 1995*

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Mr. Speaker, today is the Department of Veterans Affairs' [VA] 22nd

Annual National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans. The program honors hospitalized veterans who face unique day-to-day challenges. This is the one day of the year that the local community is asked to visit or pay special tribute to our hospitalized veterans. If friends and relatives can't visit hospitalized veterans today, I hope they will call them.

In connection with this special program, I want to bring to the attention of my colleagues a project that has been underway for some time to provide patient bedside telephones—what most people consider a necessity—in VA medical centers. Anyone who has ever been a patient in a hospital or visited someone in a hospital knows that communicating with friends and family can be a very healing medication.

The Communication Workers of America, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, and the Pioneers of Telecommunications are donating their labor to complete many of the telephone projects now in progress. Mr. Frank Dosio heads the project and calls it PT Phone Home. The project is a cooperative effort among local telephone companies, telecommunications unions, PT Phone Home and the VA. The entire VA inpatient hospital system should have bedside phone service no later than December 1996.

VA facilities have office and operation telephone systems, however, telephone communication for patients was only available at a limited number of pay telephones in the hospitals. The expense of installing room telephones was a determining factor in not making in-room telephones available. With limited resources, the VA opted to focus on quality equipment, staff, and facilities and had to defer availability of private local telephones for patients. In recent years, the goal has been to make telephones available as new facilities were constructed.

The massive undertaking of making telephones available to more veterans who are patients now requires a considerable amount of planning and financing. One of the most important features about the current and comprehensive project, among others, is the help that is being provided by the local telecommunications labor force in the places where the VA facilities are located. The communications workers have donated valuable labor on their weekends and days off. And some communities have conducted local fund raisers for these worthwhile installations. These contributions say volumes about the goodwill our citizens and communities have for veterans.

Many of these veterans have spouses who cannot travel to the hospital. The telephone is, in many cases, the only means of finding out the condition and feelings of their loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend everyone who has been involved in this project, especially the leadership of Frank Dosio and those who have assisted him. I have heard nothing but favorable comments from veteran patients throughout the country, and I urge Secretary Brown to make certain that every hospital in the VA system has bedside telephone service as soon as possible.

#### TRIBUTE TO PETTY OFFICER OSCAR GOMEZ

#### HON. RONALD D. COLEMAN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, February 14, 1995*

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I wish to pay tribute to Petty Officer Oscar Gomez who has been recognized as the Nation's Navy Reserve Enlisted Recruiter of the Year.

Petty Officer Gomez has spent 10 of his 13 years on active duty with the Navy. He set a goal of 46 recruits at the beginning of fiscal year 1994 and achieved 167 percent of that goal by signing up 77 recruits. Gomez will be promoted to Petty Officer 1st Class in El Paso. The El Paso recruiting office can claim both the country's top recruiter and the Nation's top recruiting office for the past several years.

This achievement is especially remarkable in light of the fact that El Paso is a landlocked city in the middle of the southwest desert.

Mr. Speaker, Oscar Gomez is an outstanding citizen and a national treasure, and I am privileged to count him as one of my constituents. I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking Petty Officer Oscar Gomez for his efforts and tireless service to our Nation and saluting him in this milestone in his professional career.

#### IN RECOGNITION OF MANOLO REYES

#### HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, February 14, 1995*

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to join with thousands of my constituents and recognize Dr. Manolo Reyes for over a half century of public service in this country and in his native Cuba.

On the occasion of his 70th birthday, Manolo Reyes had a street in Miami named in his honor in recognition of decades of leadership in south Florida. Manolo Reyes earned a law degree in Cuba and was a successful figure on Cuban television. With the establishment of the Castro dictatorship, he joined thousands of his fellow Cubans in a life of exile.

In Miami, he became the face of the exile community for an entire generation of Cubans and non-Cubans alike, as the first Hispanic television news anchor in the United States. Those of us who grew up watching his morning newscast remember his dignified and authoritative delivery of the day's events. For his ground breaking work in television journalism Manolo Reyes received an Emmy.

After earning a second law degree in the United States, Manolo entered a second career in the health care field. Since 1987, he has worked at Mercy Hospital overseeing patient and governmental activities.

In addition to all this, Dr. Reyes founded the Saint John Bosco Clinic which helps care for those who would otherwise fall through the cracks in the health care system. He has been quoted as saying "next to my family, this clinic is the most precious act of love in my life."

To Manolo Reyes and his family, I offer my congratulations on the recognition of a lifetime of achievement and best wishes for many more years of success.

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT LAW ENFORCEMENT BLOCK GRANTS ACT OF 1995

SPEECH OF

#### HON. STEVE C. LATOURETTE

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, February 13, 1995*

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 728) to control crime by providing law enforcement block grants.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Chairman, just a few days prior to the last election, in Wickliffe, OH, a man armed with a shotgun went into a middle school and began firing indiscriminately. Tragically, a long-time school employee lay dead at the conclusion of this rampage, others were wounded, and the psychological terror visited upon the staff and students has yet to be quantified.

The police response time was excellent, the police work was excellent, and now the issue of the gunman's guilt or innocence will be left up to the judicial system.

In the last week, Wickliffe qualified for and received a 3 year grant under the Cops Fast Program to place an additional police officer on the street. Everyone connected with law enforcement recognizes that more police officers on the street is a good thing. However, 10 new police officers would have done nothing to prevent the tragedy last November in Wickliffe.

The good news is that the block grant program now under debate in this House will keep in place the additional police officer received by Wickliffe and any other locality that has received funding under the provisions passed in last year's crime bill. The better news is that the Republican block grant program will give to Wickliffe and other cities the flexibility to engage in school security measures that may have a preventive impact upon future tragedies.

Local communities will have the option of applying for and receiving funds to acquire metal detectors, security guards and/or security cameras and systems for their schools if those local communities feel that that is one of the more pressing needs to fight crime in their communities. No longer will they be subject to a one size fits all solution and be required to buy off-the-rack crime prevention. Instead, they will be able to employ a tailor-made, local solution to their most pressing needs. As with many of the provisions in this year's crime bill debate, this solution just makes sense in the daily battle against crime.

#### REPRESENTATIVE TORRICELLI— PERSPECTIVE ON NATO EXPANSION

#### HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, February 14, 1995*

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, last week the Los Angeles Times ran an excellent article by