

symbol, not in political symbol, but have actually voted for a 7-year plan to balance the budget, numbers and details. And it must be equally exasperating to figure out why that has not happened, why 300 of us cannot get together and do that.

Let me offer a question and then the challenge that I talked about. The question is, I have to wonder whether the leaders of the Republican Party and frankly whether the leaders of my party at the White House really want to resolve this problem or whether they want to set themselves up for the 1996 election.

It is not too farfetched, Mr. Speaker, to think that here is what is going on. The Republican Party has had tremendous success in this country at all levels of politics by making the argument that they are the party of lower taxes and leaner Government and zero deficits, and the Democrats are the party of higher taxes and larger Government and higher deficits. They have done very well having that argument in elections. The thought occurs to me that maybe the Republican Party is better served by keeping that argument going through the 1996 election.

On the other hand, the Democrats have done well in the November 1995 elections and the public opinion polls would suggest are doing well right now with the argument that Republicans are callous to the needs of seniors and children and the environment and maybe the leaders of our party have decided that we would be doing well to keep that argument going through the 1996 election as well.

I pose the question tonight in all sincerity, without impugning the motive of any person in this House or any person in the Government, as to whether that is what is really going on, as to whether we are engaged in a huge choreographic exercise here that is simply designed to lead up to the 1996 campaign so we all have the right themes and the right sound bites. If that is the case, we are doing our country and this institution a tremendous disservice. Because there are two things at stake here that we may never again in our careers have a chance to address.

The first is the chance to reverse a 25-year flood of red ink that has put the children of this country at great risk. I believe sincerely that there will never again come in this century and maybe not for the next couple of decades an opportunity to truly balance the budget of the Federal Government. There are 300 of us here in this Chamber who are ready to do that. I do not know why we have not been able to get together and figure out a way to do that.

The other point that I would make to you, and I think is even greater significance, the credibility of politicians in general and this institution in particular was very low when this all began, and it is much lower as we stand here tonight. And I believe that what is at stake is not simply our ability to put

the fiscal house of this country in order, it is also maybe our last chance in a long time to make people believe that the political system works for them again.

I stand here tonight, 11:20, after a long day, frankly, wondering what is going on.

Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to yield to the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS].

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. We are friends and classmates from the 102d Congress.

I want to respond to the gentleman's question, because I think he raises more than a rhetorical question. He makes a valid point. I have wondered what it would take to forge a bipartisan compromise on a long-term agreement to balance the Federal budget.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. ANDREWS] has expired.

ON THE CONTINUING RESOLUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. FOX] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS].

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, to return to the colloquy with the gentleman from New Jersey, I simply want to point out that one of the concerns, one of the frustrations that I have had is that the closer we have gotten to the actual moment of truth, the moment of truth being that time which actually came today, when we voted on the final version of a 7-year plan to balance the Federal budget using honest numbers, this is an agreement scored by the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, it balances the Federal budget in 7 years by limiting the growth, the increase in Federal spending to 3 percent per year, the closer we have gotten to that moment of truth, the fewer Members on your side of the aisle who have been willing to stand up and cast that tough vote.

□ 2320

Now let me point out that the gentleman is the exception to the rule. The gentleman from New Jersey not only voted for the Democratic alternative, the substitute version offered by the Democrats to balance the Federal budget, he also voted for the continuing resolution a couple of nights ago, but let me point out, because I have here in my hot little hands, as they would say, the three rollcall votes that I consider most pivotal.

First is the vote the gentleman referred to as the vote earlier this year, in the first quarter of the year, on the balanced budget amendment, which was part of the Contract With America; that was rollcall vote 51 in the House of Representatives. Voting yes were 228 Republicans and 72 Democrats, including the gentleman from New Jersey.

And later, rollcall vote number 741, this was on the so-called coalition budget, the version of a balanced budget offered by the more moderate conservative Democrats which was officially offered on this floor as the Democrat substitute or the Democrat alternative on a balanced budget. Out of 199 Democrats, 68 voted for the concept and the plan for balancing the budget at that time; 131 Democrats were opposed.

And then just 2 nights ago in rollcall vote, and I have got it as well, rollcall vote number 8002 in the House of Representatives, only 48 Democrats, again including the gentleman from New Jersey, voted for the continuing appropriations which stipulated only that we would be committed, in passing that bill into law, to the concept of balancing the Federal budget in 7 years using honest CBS numbers.

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Reclaiming my time, Mr. Speaker, the fact is this does show bipartisan support, that the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. ANDREWS] has well established himself as someone who is going to work with the Republican majority to, in fact, pass a balanced budget. What we need is enough of those Democrats on the other side of the aisle to talk to the President, and the fact is we would not have these furloughs, we would not have these agencies not funded, we would not have programs stopped now, if the President would only sign a balanced budget that the said on no less than six occasions that he would sign.

Mr. ANDREWS. If the gentleman would yield, I will be very succinct. I do not want to intrude on his time.

Frankly let me try to answer your question. Here is how I think we can get the 300 votes, and everyone has their own version of this. The tax cut will be smaller, the money taken from the tax cut will be put back into Medicare. There will be a little bit more taken out of agriculture and energy, put back into the environment and education, and there is your 300 votes, and it will take us 15 minutes.

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Reclaiming my time, I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. HOKE. I would like to engage you just a little bit longer on this because I think the questions you raised are more than rhetorical, and I really appreciate your sincerity, and I have to say that I reject your conclusions. I mean, cause you know you have clearly been absolutely consistent, and I looked at the votes earlier, just like FRANK did, and I think that this is not about policy—well, it is ultimately about policy, but I really do believe that it is about politics and that politics is about power, and I do not know how else you can explain the voting patterns.

You know, one of the things that I saw by looking at this is that there were 24 Members of your side who voted for the balanced budget amendment on January 26, an amendment to

the Constitution, who voted against the continuing resolution 2 nights ago. Forty-eight Members voted for it, but 24 of the ones that had voted for the BBA back in January voted against this continuing resolution. I mean how do you explain that?

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Reclaiming the time, I appreciate the comments of my colleague.

The fact of the matter is a balanced budget is going to help everyone in every region of the country, all ages, and the fact is by decreasing the cost of mortgage payments for the balanced budget, decreasing costs for car payments, decreasing costs of college tuition, we are going to do what every other government is required to do, school government, local government, and families.

So the balanced budget is an idea whose time has arrived. We need to have the political will to make sure we talk to the White House, that we have more of both sides of the aisle working together.

Mr. HOKE. Well, we clearly have the political will, and the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. ANDREWS] clearly has the political will, but you are trying to get to the question of what is really going on, and you are saying, if we reduce some of the tax cuts, reduce some of the tax cuts and tinker a little bit with the environment and some of these educational things—I do not know who else has time here.

WE HAVE TO LEARN TO WORK TOGETHER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maine [Mr. BALDACCI] is recognized for five minutes.

Mr. BALDACCI. Mr. Speaker, Members of the House, the resolution that I put forward is a resolution so that the Congress could continue to work on Sunday, that we not take the day off, that we continue to do our work.

There are thousands of seniors who are qualifying for disability, veterans disability. There are many people who are trying to visit our national parks at Acadia and other national treasures who have been told that it is closed, and we have our work to do because we have not yet been able to open the Government back up again.

We put this together as members of the freshman Democratic Party, but we reached out in a bipartisan way to continue working, to do what is in the public interest, not in the party interest.

Mr. Speaker, as we argue the balanced budget and as we argue the balanced budget over 7 years, I stand before you as somebody who has supported a balanced budget over 7 years and supported the particulars of that balanced budget over 7 years. I voted for it twice.

The problem with what is being offered in the Congress is, is a balanced budget that incorporates \$245 billion in

tax cuts. People who are earning over \$200,000 are going to get a check for \$14,000. You are going to have to make deeper cuts in Medicare and Medicaid. You eliminate a disproportionate share from hospitals that serve communities where the poorer people are being taken care of. It eliminates and annihilates a lot of rural hospitals throughout our country. In my State of Maine we lose \$187 million over 2 years. The senior Senator from the State of Maine did not vote for the budget that was put forward by the Republicans, voted for a balanced budget that did not have tax breaks. That is the responsible approach, but that approach is not being put forward by the majority.

So do not ask us to support a balanced budget that has \$245 billion in tax breaks over 7 years. It is causing too much pain and suffering on the seniors. It causes too much pain and suffering for children. You are cutting student aid deeper than you have to.

When we put forward the balanced budget over 7 years, we took \$100 billion of the \$245 billion, put it back into Medicare, we put it back into Medicaid, student financial aid, and veterans benefits, and we did it over 7 years. So we were able to come up with a framework that got us to a balanced budget, but that did not do it with as much pain and suffering on the seniors, on health care, on kids and on people with disabilities as much as what is being proposed by the majority.

I do think that we can reach a compromise on this particular issue, I do not think we are that far apart, and I truly believe, as the gentleman has stated here before, that we can work together in that regard. There is significant support in both Chambers for that. But I think we have to work together at it. It cannot be your way or the highway. In the same way on our side it cannot be this is it or else. We truly have to communicate regularly because we have to understand that the Congress is being controlled by the majority and that the administration being controlled by the President, and they are going to have to learn to work together in the public interest.

□ 2330

We really need to force those lines of communication to open up and to continue, but I really have to tell you, the budget that has been put forth is not a good budget for America. It rolls back environmental standards. I believe that what the majority is proposing, and what I have seen people talking about, is going backwards. We want to go forward, not backward. We do not represent Government as it is, but we represent environmental standards and an easier way to get to it. We represent a student financial aid program that does not have as much regulation to it, but that gets resources out there.

Mr. HOKE. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BALDACCI. I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. HOKE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield for a question, I think what the gentleman is saying is absolutely right. We have very honest differences about these things. Maybe some of the differences get exaggerated for political effect on both sides. What I do not understand is why you would be opposed to the continuing resolution that very clearly clarifies the only difference is in committing to a 7-year balanced budget scored by CBO. Why not that?

Mr. BALDACCI. Just to complete the question, the problem is that you take a continuing resolution, which is really, because Congress has not finished its work, and, how, I have not been here before, and they have had continuing resolutions; but because we did not finish the work, you added these items to it, which were like you were trying to do your budget approach through reconciliation and a continuing resolution. That is what made it very difficult to support that methodology. I think that had more to do with that.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BARR). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. GUTKNECHT] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. GUTKNECHT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

WHY WILL THE PRESIDENT NOT SIGN THE CONTINUING RESOLUTION?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. HOKE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOKE. Mr. Speaker, I would continue my question to the gentleman. My question is simple. What makes this complex, to simply cast a "yes" vote, an "aye" vote on the CR? It is a clean CR as the President asked for, with one sentence. I read that sentence. It is a short sentence. It is a benign sentence. It says that the President and the Congress will honestly and sincerely work together to come up with, that they will be committed to balancing the budget in fiscal year 2002 under the scoring of CBO.

Mr. BALDACCI. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, all I am saying to him is that I do not think we are that far apart. The problem we have is that in a continuing resolution, which is because the work was not finished on time, we needed to pass it for a couple of more weeks. A lot of things, including that, were added into it, and it really was not the proper vehicle.

We have the reconciliation budget, which we voted on today, which really is the proper vehicle. That needs to go through the process, and then we should demand that the President, the Speaker, and the majority leader negotiate that budget reconciliation and work out those differences over that