

Cuban people. I do not want to do that, and I know none of my colleagues do either. Certainly, we all want to see an end to the Castro regime—a cold war relic whose time has passed. I believe, however, that Castro's days are numbered. Communism has fallen around the world, and it will fall in Cuba as well. We should let it fall of its own weight, and then be there to assist the Cuban people in developing and nurturing a new democratic successor. This bill will not achieve that goal—in fact, it will move in the other direction. I urge Senators to oppose it.

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. DEWINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. INHOFE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I also ask unanimous consent to now proceed as in morning business.

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

#### SCHOOLBUS SAFETY

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to discuss a matter that I have discussed on several other occasions on this floor over the last few months, and that is the issue of schoolbus safety in this country. I would like to update the Senate on the progress that we are making in this particular area.

The bad news, Mr. President, is that there are still, we believe, over 100,000 unsafe schoolbuses on the road in this country today, 100,000 schoolbuses that at this moment, at least in the Eastern time zone, the Eastern part of the country, are in the process of taking children home from school.

I have been involved in, and my staff has been involved in, trying to alert the school officials, schoolbus safety officials, in all the 50 States to this particular problem. And I think we are making progress on a number of fronts.

First, one of the major causes, as I have talked about before on this floor, of schoolbus fatalities is the drawstrings that appear around the waist and other parts of clothing of the coats worn by many schoolchildren today. As children get off of schoolbuses, this drawstring is liable to get snagged in the gap that exists between the bus wall and the handrail itself.

Since 1991, at least five children that we know of have been killed in this manner, have been stuck on the bus that that particular drawstring has caught, and they have been dragged by the bus and they have been killed.

I am pleased, Mr. President, to report that the Consumer Product Safety Commission is taking action on this

problem. Last month they recommended to the American Society of Testing Materials, the ASTM, that the drawstrings be shortened. Experts agree that this measure will help prevent these accidents.

This is, Mr. President, a big step—a big step—in the right direction. As a result of CPSC's recommendation, the ASTM has already announced a voluntary standard for the drawstrings. Drawstrings that are 4 or 5 inches in length are now banned.

The ASTM also announced plans for a research project to determine if there is any ideally safe drawstring length. The results of this study are to be announced on November 30.

Second, we, as a country, are starting to fix the buses. A bus manufacturing company bought some of the assets of another bus company, a company had gone out of business, a defunct bus company that was purchased. And the new bus company has decided voluntarily to provide materials to retrofit many of the dangerous buses made by the defunct company. It will do this at cost. That particular company is also trying to identify other unsafe buses that are still on the road so they, too, can be retrofitted.

Third, I have brought with me to the floor, Mr. President, a copy of a pamphlet that children are getting in an elementary school in my hometown of Cedarville, OH. This particular pamphlet gives good advice to parents. "Teach your children to look out for the straps and drawstrings. Be very careful when you are getting on and off the schoolbus."

This was provided courtesy of the Pupil Transportation Safety Institute, 1-800-836-2210. It is a very simple brochure, but a brochure that we hope will do some good.

Mr. President, in conclusion, I think parents all over America should get a pamphlet just like this. It is available from the Pupil Transportation Safety Institute. Let me again repeat the number, 1-800-836-2210. As the pamphlet says, "Schoolbus safety is a team effort." So, Mr. President, let us work together to make all these schoolbuses as safe as they can be.

#### RECONCILIATION

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I would also like to talk about another issue this afternoon, and that is an issue that I discussed briefly this morning, an issue that we in the Senate will be debating for the next few weeks and an issue that has, I believe, historic importance, not just in this Senate but to this country, not just to this generation but to our children's generation and our grandchildren's.

I rise specifically today, Mr. President, to discuss the reconciliation bill that we expect to reach the floor sometime in the next 2 weeks.

This bill embodies the decision that the American people expressed last November. The American people last De-

cember decided that we need to make a fundamental change in course for our U.S. Government.

Many of us ran, many of us talked about these issues, and what were the commitments? I think we can summarize them as follows. There are many, but four essential commitments were made last November, four commitments that we will work over the next few weeks to carry out:

First, we need to balance the budget.

Second, we need to replace the welfare system with a system that rewards work and creates opportunity.

Third, we need to rescue Medicare from bankruptcy.

And fourth, we need to give some tax relief to the hard-working families of this country. Four basic simple things that I believe, if passed, if enacted, will fundamentally change the direction of this country.

While these are simple, I think it is fair to say that this is really an extremely ambitious agenda. Even to consider an agenda of this magnitude would make this a truly historic Congress. But in this reconciliation package, the Senate is about to pass this agenda, to actually pass it, and to send it on to the President of the United States.

Except for a few days at the beginning of 1953, the last time a Democratic President had to deal with a Republican Congress—with a Republican Congress—was from 1947 to 1949. In the 1948 election, the Democratic President accused the Republicans of running a do-nothing Congress. The current President is very well equipped with rhetorical ammunition. They work very hard on this at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, but I think that the charge that this is a do-nothing Congress is not one the White House will be using any time soon, or at least the White House will be using successfully any time soon, because the fact is, this Congress has stepped up to the plate and made some extremely tough decisions.

This Congress has passed a balanced budget plan for the first time, if we carry it out, since 1969. This Congress is fundamentally overhauling the welfare system, and just a few weeks ago on this floor, this Senate passed a historic welfare bill.

I believe this Congress will take the steps to save Medicare from bankruptcy.

This Congress is working to relieve the tax burden on working families.

Mr. President, this is the historic agenda the 104th Congress is prepared to send to the President of the United States. Let us make no mistake, this reconciliation package is the only proposal on the table that will achieve the goals of the American people.

Our national goals are to balance the budget and to let working families keep more of their own money. The Republican reconciliation package accomplishes both of these goals. Indeed, Mr. President, if you look at it a certain way, these two are, in fact, the

same goal. If we do not take action now to balance the budget, the tax burden will only get worse and worse for American families in the future.

The report of the bipartisan entitlement commission could not be more clear: If we do not change our present course by the year 2012, every single penny in the Federal budget will be consumed by entitlements and interest on the national debt. If in the year 2012 we want Government to do anything at all, such as run the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, run a program for women, infants, and children, the WIC Program, or any other things we consider important, it would have to mean a tax increase, a huge, staggering tax increase. You would have to have a tax increase, because there is no money left to do these things.

Let me try to put our present course in historical perspective and talk about an American family.

When my parents graduated from high school in early 1940's, the debt on each child who graduated that year was approximately \$360. By the time my wife, Fran, and I graduated in 1965, it was up to \$1,600 for each child.

When our older children, Patrick, Jill, and Becky, graduated in the mid-1980's, that figure had risen per child. The debt for each child graduating those years was \$9,000. If we continue to go the way we have been going, by the year 2012, just 1 year after our grandson, Albert, graduates from high school and just 1 year after our daughter, Anna, enters college, by that year 2012, that figure will be \$25,000. That will be \$25,000 in debt for each person—each man, woman, child—in this country.

What a staggering debt, what a horrible legacy we would be leaving to our children and our grandchildren. Clearly, the longer we wait to change course, the worse it will be for the American people.

The reconciliation package that we will be considering balances the budget by slowing the rate of growth of Federal spending. Let me repeat that. It balances the budget by slowing the rate of growth.

Columnist James Glassman of the Washington Post has proposed a useful way of looking at this bill, this package. Add up all the spending by the Federal Government over the last 7 years and compare it with the total this budget proposes to spend over the next 7 years. The result: Spending over the next 7 years will increase over the last 7 years by \$2.6 trillion.

Let me repeat that. Spending will increase. The truth is that by limiting spending growth to just a little more than the expected rate of inflation, by doing this, what would seem to be, simple act, we can balance the budget.

If we as a nation cannot summon the will and the courage to make that relatively small sacrifice, how on Earth can we expect the next generation to face a budget with no money in the discretionary account, no money for de-

fense, no money for social programs, and \$25,000 of debt owed by every single American?

Mr. President, over a working lifetime, the interest alone on the national debt will cost an American child born today a total of \$187,000.

It is clear to me as well as to the American people this could very well be our last chance to solve this problem before it is really too late. This is a grave responsibility, and I do not believe that we can back away from it.

Is there an alternative? Is there anything else we can do? The President has proposed a different approach. His budget, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, the budget office that he told us we should be following, contains deficits, according to their calculation. His budget, the President's budget, contains deficits of \$200 billion as far as the eye can see, for the foreseeable future. His budget never gets to balance. Let me repeat that. According to CBO, the President's budget never gets to balance. In other words, no balanced budget, staggering deficits as far as the eye can see.

Mr. President, I do not believe that is how America wants to begin a new millennium. For over 200 years, we have given hope to all the nations of the world—hope that free men and women are, in fact, capable of self-government, capable of making responsible choices to ensure a prosperous future for our families, our children, and for our country.

Mr. President, a vote for the Republican reconciliation package is a vote to balance the budget so that we can start reducing the national debt and so we can put America on course toward a future we can be proud to leave our children.

The administration's budget proposal would take today's staggering deficits, add 24 percent, and then ask our children and grandchildren to pay our bills. Often in the past, Americans have faced up to a choice, a choice between two futures. The choice we make in this historic Congress will rank with some of the most important in our Nation's history. As Congress decides and as America decides, I believe we should stay true to our national calling. We should prove, Mr. President, that America is in fact capable of responsibility. We must balance the budget so that our children and grandchildren do not have to pay our bills. We must, we should, put the future first and support the reconciliation bill.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CUBAN LIBERTY AND DEMOCRATIC SOLIDARITY [LIBERTAD] ACT OF 1995

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

AMENDMENT NO. 2916, AS MODIFIED

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I appreciate the passion with which the author of this term limitation amendment believes in his cause. I can also appreciate the fact that he is adamant in having the Senate debate the issue of term limits. But I strongly suggest that the remaining days of the first session of the 104th Congress are not the time to undertake this debate. There will be plenty of opportunity when we return next year, as the able and distinguished majority leader has indicated, for the Senate to consider a constitutional amendment limiting the terms of service. I urge my colleagues to not vote for cloture today and to reject the amendment.

Notwithstanding the logistics, I believe that the Founding Fathers were exactly correct when they declined to establish in the Constitution arbitrary limits beyond those that are set forth in the Constitution regarding congressional service. It is not that the idea had not occurred to them. On the contrary, the Framers of our great charter deliberately rejected this structural prescription—one might call it a proscription; it is both a prescription and a proscription. Instead, they opted for having the number of terms a Member could serve limited not by the calendar, but rather by the Member's performance, measured through regular and periodic elections. After more than 200 years under that principle, we would all be correct to question why it deserves radical change.

Proponents may argue that it is, in fact, necessary to amend our Constitution in order to preserve the Framers' original vision of a citizen-legislator who would set aside his plow to serve the Republic, only to return to his fields as swiftly as possible. But when I think about those men who painstakingly crafted our Constitution—men like Madison, Washington, Franklin, Hamilton, Wilson, Mason, and others—I have serious doubts about the strength of such vision. These were men who devoted nearly all of their adult lives to public service. And that such men could truly embrace that bucolic notion is dubious, at best. The fact is that the citizen-legislator has long been a political myth. Now, with the ever-increasing complexities of public affairs, it is also an unrealistic myth.

For the same reason we have professional doctors, professional accountants, professional teachers and professional engineers, we need an experienced Congress. In each of the cases I have mentioned, experience counts, and it should count. No one would go to an untrained and inexperienced heart surgeon. If they want to do that, they could come to me. That surgeon only