

in the Senate bill prior to the invocation of the Byrd rule during the last hours of debate.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum, and I ask unanimous consent that the time for the quorum not be charged against either side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I yield myself 5 minutes off the motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire is recognized.

THE IMPENDING SHUTDOWN OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I am not going to speak specifically to the resolution, but I do want to speak to the underlying issues with which the resolution—and the other business which we will be taking up today—is involved. That, of course, is the question of the impending shutdown of the Federal Government, what has brought it about, and where we are going.

I think it is unfortunate that it has been characterized—but it is not unusual—as I understand it, by the national press as an event which is involving a confrontation over personalities, a confrontation that has borne the position of business as usual, or politics as usual; not necessarily name calling, maybe name implying, rather than a confrontation for what it is.

This is an issue involving some very substantive philosophical differences that we have arrived at, and we have not yet arrived completely at the point of final decision, if there is ever a final point of decision, in the business of governing because the point of final decision is more appropriately the reconciliation bill at which this motion to instruct is directed. The reconciliation bill, which is now being conferenced, involves the fundamental changes which we as Republicans have proposed—or many of them anyway—especially in the entitlement accounts; fundamental changes which go to the fact that we believe the Nation's budget must be brought under control, that our Federal Government must work towards a balanced budget; and that needs to be done within a confined period of time; that we need to reach that balanced budget by the year 2002, or 7 years from now; that the way you reach that is not by cutting the Federal Government but slowing its rate of

growth, and specifically slowing the rate of growth in certain major entitlement programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, welfare, farm programs; and, that in slowing the rate of growth of the Federal Government we believe—and we have put forward proposals with which we think we can deliver better programs.

We can, for example—and have—put forward a program which is going to deliver to our senior citizens we believe a much stronger Medicare system, at least one which will be solvent, which is absolutely critical, something which will not occur if action is not taken. As we have heard from the Medicare trustees, the Medicare trustees say that it is going to be insolvent unless something is done. What we have proposed—and what is being discussed—essentially is to say to seniors we are not going to allow you to keep your present health care system. But, if you wish to participate in it, we will give you a choice of other forms of health care delivery. We are going to give you choices of other forms of health delivery, like I or other Members of Congress have, and using an HMO, or a PPO, or some of these other initials, which mean basically groups of doctors and different types of health-care suppliers getting together and offering you, the seniors, service.

We are going to bring the marketplace into the Medicare system, and by bringing the marketplace into the Medicare system hopefully create more efficiencies of delivery of service while still delivering first class service, and in the process giving our seniors more choices; and, also in the process slowing the rate of growth of Medicare.

We have proposed in the welfare area that we take this system—which is so fundamentally flawed, which has created such dependency amongst so many of our citizenry and has not allowed people to get off the system but rather put people into the system for generations—and say to those folks, "Listen. You can only be on welfare for 5 years. You have got to be willing to go to work, if you are going to get welfare benefits." And, more importantly, we are going to turn it back to the States and allow the States to manage this welfare system, something that we should never have taken from in the first place because the States can do it so much better, to be quite honest, because they are closer to the people that are impacted by this.

So we are putting forward ideas which fundamentally reform the way this Government operates.

Today we are confronted with the fact that the President has vetoed the continuing resolution, which would allow the Government to operate for a couple of weeks, because he disagrees with the basic theme of the proposals that we are putting forward. It is the administration's essential position that the status quo works. I do not believe the status quo works. And many of us obviously on this side of the aisle

do not believe that the status quo works. We happen to believe that this Government needs to be adjusted, that we cannot pass a Government on to our children which is fundamentally bankrupt and expect our children to have an opportunity to prosper.

So we come to the point of decision. That point of decision is going to be the reconciliation bill. But, prior to getting to that point, we have reached this preliminary discussion over about how we fund the Government for the next 2 weeks. And the President has decided to make a stand at this point on his belief that the Government of the status quo is appropriate. So that is his right. It is his right to put forward that philosophical position—that this Government is not large enough, that it should get larger, that this Government should take more taxes from our citizens rather than less tax taxes, that this Government, which has a Medicare system which is going to be bankrupt, according to our own trustees, should pursue a system which does not correct that system, or improve that system. That is his right to put forward those philosophical differences.

What I think is unfortunate, however, is that, as we move forward over the next week, we will be in a period of confrontation which appears to be one surrounding politics as usual—name calling or posturing that is superficial—rather than one that in actuality we are really discussing here, really getting to the question of how this Government is delivered over the next 7 years, as to how this Government is going to be restructured and reformed, and, in my opinion, improved, and significantly strengthened.

So as we take up this issue for the balance of the day—and I suspect we are going to be in this matter of the Government shutdown for quite a few days because I do not see any immediate resolution of it—I hope that we will stick to the issue of discussing the substance that has gotten us here, the substantive issue which have brought us to this point.

Those substantive issues really come down to this. Do we wish to bring the Government into balance? Do we wish to have a Government which is fiscally responsible, one which is a Government which we can afford, and a Government which our children can afford? That is what this debate is really all about. It is not about who talked to who on the flight to Israel. It is not about what the phone conversations were, and the tone of the phone conversations. It is about whether or not we as a nation are going to finally make some decisions, and we in the Congress and this President as a Presidency are going to finally make some decisions about restructuring this Government and make it affordable for our children, and how we go about doing it.

My expectation is that we will not resolve this overnight; that decisions which will be made in the next 24 hours will not be those so momentous as to

complete or even significantly impact that final decision process, but it may well be significant in impacting the manner in which we get to that final decision. We can spend our time over the next few days as we debate this continuing resolution, which is simply a preamble to the major issue which is reconciliation, we can spend our time debating the superficial issues of who, where, when, or what names we call each other or we can talk in terms of the substance of the debate which is how do we reform this Government and how do we take this Government which is so completely out of control and bring it under control; how do we give our children an opportunity to have a lifestyle that is better than ours; how do we become a generation which passes more on to children than was passed on to us by our elders.

These are the core issues, the issues of substance which we should be discussing over the next few days, and hopefully we can attend to those issues rather than become involved in the ancillary issues of name calling, political posturing, of Government by polls and Government by reelection.

Mr. President, I yield back such time as I may have.

Mr. PRYOR addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THOMAS). The Senator from Arkansas.

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I was not planning to respond to my good friend from New Hampshire, and I agree with him 100 percent; it is not the time for name calling and politicization of this issue any longer. But I do feel it is time to set the record straight, and I would like to take just a moment of the Senate's time to sort of begin to set the record straight as to what is happening right now with regard to this issue of so-called shutting down the Government.

This is not something that just happened in the last 24 or 36 or 48 hours. This has been going on for several months now. In fact, back on September 22, Speaker GINGRICH boasted:

I don't care what the price is. I don't care if we have no executive offices. I don't care if we have no bonds for 60 days, not this time.

That is a quote in the Washington Post September 22, 1995.

Look at what the Republicans have done. This is a fact. They have completely shut the Democrats out of the budget process. We know it. They know it. It is a fact of life. We have not been a part of this process. We have wanted to be a part of this process, but we have not been included. For example, after proposing the most massive cut in Medicare in the history of America, our Republican friends held only 1 day of hearings on this proposal—1 day. It is the biggest cut in Medicare we have had since 1965.

By comparison, the House held 42 days of hearings on Whitewater, Waco,

and Ruby Ridge. The Senate held 48 days of hearings on these same issues. One day of hearings, 1 day of hearings on this massive Medicare cut.

Mr. President, I do think it is time to set the record straight. I also think it is time to realize that the President is not willing to impose an \$11 a month premium increase on every single Medicare beneficiary as a condition for keeping the Government running.

Look who is being held hostage here. Every Medicare recipient in America is being held hostage, and the price is closing down the Government. And we are going to blame it on the President of the United States.

What is happening is we are only implementing what we call the Gingrich strategy. This is the implementation of a strategy that was conceived long ago but today is manufactured. It is an artificial crisis that has been created. It is a confrontation that has been dreamed up by people who do not care if this Government functions or not. It is a shameful experience. It is an experience about which I think most good-willed people in this body actually shudder when thinking about the Founding Fathers of this country—bringing us to this point of closing down the Government in order to make political hay.

Mr. President, you know and all of us know that this artificial crisis basically revolves around one provision, the Medicare provision in the reconciliation bill, and the continuing resolution. But the truth is that the Medicare provision in this particular continuing resolution is also included in the reconciliation bill.

Why is it we have not straightened that out so far? It is pretty apparent. We have not even appointed the conferees to go to conference on the reconciliation bill, and yet we are about to close down the Government. We do not even have the conferees appointed. There is no one to go to conference with and to solve this issue. That has to be a problem, and it has to be a responsibility of the majority party in the Senate and in the House. The Chair knows this. I know this. My colleagues know this.

I think it is time to set the record straight. Earlier this morning, the Democratic party, Democratic side of the aisle had agreed; we thought we were getting ready, with unanimous consent, by voice vote to go ahead and pass the continuing resolution, let it go down to the President, not hold up this thing any longer, not continue the threat of closing down the Government, and then let the President veto it. Let him do it early in the day.

We wanted that to happen. I hope that can still happen. Right now I do not know exactly what is going on, but I do know this, that this President at this moment is ready, willing, and able to talk to the other side of the aisle, I assume at the White House or anywhere else, and talk to them about the measures necessary to keep this Gov-

ernment functioning as it was intended to function and to stop implementing this grand Gingrich strategy, this contrived artificial crisis which does not have to happen.

Mr. President, I understand my good friend and colleague from North Dakota would like 4 minutes, and I yield my friend 4 minutes at this time.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Arkansas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota has 4 minutes.

Mr. DORGAN. Let me take just a minute to follow on these comments.

We are here in the middle of a significant debate about the reconciliation bill and about the continuing resolution, the debt extension, and the public might wonder why. Why are we doing all of this?

A continuing resolution is necessary because virtually none of the appropriations bills have been passed on time. I think one of them reached the President on time. Most of them have not been passed through conference and sent to the President. They are supposed to be done, but they are not done.

Even more important, the law requires that the reconciliation bill be passed by Congress on June 15. It is now November 13. The fact is we are now going to in November and December debate a reconciliation bill for which there have not been conferees appointed 5 months after the law requires this Congress to do its job.

It seems to me it is hard for people who are doing this to claim they are part of some reform party. So I guess the point I would make about this issue of the shutdown is people are wanting to know who is going to share the blame or claim the credit. There is going to be no credit here, no credit in a shutdown.

Yes. I would say it is true there are too many pollsters in the White House. But it is also true, painfully true, there are too many Republican Senators running for President. That colors all of these decisions. And it is also true that Speaker GINGRICH has boasted for months about the train wreck he is apparently going to engineer and apparently we will realize this week.

There will be nothing but blame if this happens. It is not a thoughtful approach and not the right way for us to do public policy. For 200 years representative democracy has rested on the ability to compromise among differing points of view, and that is what ought to happen today and tomorrow. And we ought to solve these problems.

THE 7-YEAR BALANCED BUDGET RECONCILIATION ACT OF 1995

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

MOTION TO INSTRUCT—NURSING HOME STANDARDS

Mr. DORGAN. On the specific amendment offered by the Senator from Arkansas, I came just to offer a word of