

what we are looking at now, to 6.4 percent per year.

Now, in the private sector, health care costs are rising at 4 to 5 percent. So it would seem that a 6.4 percent growth would be a responsible approach for Medicare growth. And that is what we are doing. We are not cutting Medicare spending; we are increasing Medicare spending at a rate of 6.4 percent per year.

The President is not being responsible when he says he will veto a continuing resolution because the Medicare part B premium is going to increase \$7 per month to keep it at the 31.5 percent, and because he does not want to have the lower level of spending so we can meet our budget resolution goal for this year, so that we can have the balanced budget. The President cannot have it both ways. The President cannot go out and say, "You cannot cut spending, you cannot balance the budget; I would like to see a balanced budget, but I am not going to give you one." He cannot keep having it both ways.

The people of this country are not stupid. The people of this country understand that we are looking at a \$5 trillion deficit, debt in this country—\$5 trillion. I would venture to say that no one ever thought we would reach the level of \$5 trillion. But we have.

The American people know that everyone is going to have to pitch in. Our lifestyles are not the same as they used to be. No one's is. In 1975, a family of four spent 33 percent of their annual income on the necessities of transportation, housing, and utilities. In 1995, that level is 46 percent. So people are not stupid. They know that even if they are making a little more money, they are not living at the same level they were. They know that. So they know that we are all going to pitch in, that we are all going to do our part to make sure that we do have a balanced budget in 7 years because our elderly want their grandchildren to have a Medicare system. Our elderly want their grandchildren to get jobs in the future. They want a sound economy. They want low interest rates. They want this country to be the country they had the opportunity to grow up in. That is what they want for their children.

Mr. President, that is what Congress is trying to give to the elderly and to the working middle-class taxpayers of our country.

Let us talk about the debt ceiling. The President has already vetoed the debt ceiling. This is what Congress tried to do. We were trying to extend the debt level and raise it to December 12, a temporary lifting of the debt ceiling, once again, so that we would be able to get the budget reconciliation in place, so that we would have the first year set out with the spending caps to go to the 7-year balanced budget. We believe it is a responsible approach to lift that debt ceiling.

We also provide that there will be no borrowing from trust funds. We provide that habeas corpus reform will take place. We provide for regulatory reform to get the onerous restrictions off of our small businesses in this country so they will be able to compete in the international marketplace so they will be able to create the new jobs that will get our economy going again.

We do ask for the commitment to the 7-year balanced budget so we will not have to talk about whether it is 10, or 9, or 8, or 7 in the future, but everyone will realize and acknowledge and commit to the 7-year balanced budget.

Now, Mr. President, our congressional leaders have said that we will negotiate on this debt limit raising. I think we should. I think the President can have his way on some of these issues. I think Congress would be willing to give.

Mr. President, it is very important that we not give on the bottom line, that we must have a temporary raising of the debt ceiling so that we can responsibly do the budget reconciliation. It would give us the final budget for this fiscal year so that we will not have to argue anymore about how much we are going to spend and so that the markets in this country will know that our commitment is good.

Once we prove to the marketplace, to our international allies and people who are buying our debt, once we show that we have the will to balance the budget, this economy is going to strengthen.

The Chairman of the Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan, has said that very thing—that once the commitment is shown, our economy will strengthen. Interest rates will remain steady and low. We will not be looking at runaway inflation, and we will start creating jobs in this country once again—not just service-sector jobs but real jobs; jobs where we can compete in the international marketplace, and we will not have to have our businesses opening corporations and manufacturing operations overseas because they cannot afford to do business here.

Mr. President, that is what we are talking about. I hope for the American people and for all of us that we and our leaders can come to terms. We do not want a Government shutdown. The last thing we want is to default on our debt. There must be some meetings. There must be some give.

Mr. President, we are here to do our part.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. INHOFE). The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. FORD. I thank the Chair. I will not be very long. I know my friend from Washington has a statement he would like to make.

PREMEDITATED TRAIN WRECK

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, I am intrigued by the statements that have been made on the Senate floor recently in the last few moments, as if this is a budget that has gone to the President.

This is no budget that has gone to the President. It is a continuing resolution that keeps Government running at a certain level, and a debt ceiling that will allow us to secure the funds to do that.

The point keeps being made that the President will not do this. Well, the President has not received a clean continuing resolution. There are add-ons. The President has not received a clean debt ceiling increase. There are add-ons.

Mr. President, just go back to April of this year. This is a premeditated—a premeditated—train wreck.

In April, the Republican leadership said this would happen. They wanted it to happen so they could talk about it. They want to put the President on the spot. I do not think any of us would sit in the Oval Office and allow Medicare to go up 25 percent.

That was an issue last week in several of the campaigns—I know it was in my State—Medicare.

We talk about statements by the commission on Medicare. Last year when they gave us a report, it was not quite as good as it was this year. This year they said Medicare would be solvent for an additional year. We have more employment, more money going into Medicare.

Somehow or another we are being blamed for inefficiency of the majority party. The inefficiency of the majority party is that they have not done their work on time. October 1 was the deadline for the appropriations bills to be on the President's desk. Here it is, November 13, 6 weeks later, and we only have two or three at the White House—6 weeks late. So the majority has been inefficient in getting the appropriations bills to the President.

This would eliminate the continuing resolution. All we need would be a debt ceiling so we would not have two bills on the President's desk.

All we are asking, Mr. President, is that we not tie other items to a continuing resolution, increasing Medicare by 25 percent. Increasing Medicare by 25 percent—we are talking about the average income in my State of those on Medicare about \$15,000. Add another \$150 a year on to that household?

I do not believe there is anyone here, if they were President, who would sign a continuing resolution that binds the President's hands, or a debt ceiling that binds the President's hands.

One thing you do not hear, you increase the debt ceiling, and after it reaches that, it is reduced. The debt ceiling is less at the time it expires than they are making it now. Why? So if we do good work, have good income, which we think we are going to, we have reduced the deficit 3 consecutive years—exactly what we said we would do in 1993.

If we get the appropriations bills out of the House and the Senate and to the President's desk, if we just give him a clean debt ceiling and a clean continuing resolution, we can sit down and work. There will be no problem.

The premeditated train wreck that was announced last April is occurring. There is not anything unknown about this. "We are going to do it. The President is going to do it our way or no way."

I have been around here a little while and I have heard that before. I believe the best interests of this country are to give us a clean debt ceiling, give us a clean continuing resolution, and then we can work out the legislative problems after that.

I think we would find that things would move a lot faster than trying to tear up the country and to tear up the financial stability of this great Nation of ours.

I hope we can get a clean debt ceiling, a clean continuing resolution, and that the majority would do their work and give us the appropriations bills so the President would have an opportunity to sign those, and we can continue with the things all of us want to, and that is work towards a balanced budget.

I yield the floor.

A BUDGET PROMISE

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, in the middle of last week, at the suggestion of one of my colleagues from Washington State in the House of Representatives, most of the Washington congressional delegation and several Members from other States in the country began a campaign to allow people in the United States to speak out in a tangible and dramatic fashion their desire that we stop coming up with excuses and pass a budget which could promise a balance to the American people.

We wanted individual citizens throughout the country to be able to say we have loaded enough in the way of debt on the backs of our children and grandchildren and that it was time to stop, time to chart a new course of action. The way in which we proposed to do this was to suggest to each and every individual in the country that he or she, if she wished the President to sign a balanced budget bill, should send the President a pen, a pen like the one I hold here in my hand, or, for that matter, a No. 2 pencil, or, in the case of the very children who will be saddled with the debts that we have run up in the past and that this President insists that we continue to run up, even a crayon. We suggested any writing instrument, in other words, Mr. President, except for a red pen, on the ground that there was a sufficient amount of red ink in Washington, DC, already.

This announcement took place on Wednesday of last week. On Friday afternoon I was present at radio station KVI in Seattle, a talk radio station, which had not much more than 24 hours earlier taken up this call and had suggested sending those pens either directly to the radio station or to some two dozen drop-off points throughout western Washington.

By the time I reached the KVI studios, there were already huge piles of envelopes containing pens—some without notes, almost all with return addresses, some with short notes to the President—stacked on the table surrounding the microphones in the studios. They numbered in the thousands, produced simply by that single radio station.

Others in the State of Washington have taken up the cause. This morning the National Taxpayers Union held a news conference attended by myself and by the junior Senator from Georgia and my colleague in the House of Representatives, together with one of these radio talk show hosts, to ask that this cause be taken up by other radio stations across the United States. If those stations have anything like the success that we had, there will literally be hundreds of thousands, perhaps up to five digits, of pens delivered to the White House, each and every one of which asks the President to sign a bill. No more excuses, no more deferrals, no more putting off to next year what we should do this year, but a set of laws, a set of changes and directions that will clearly promise us a balanced budget no later than shortly after the turn of the new century.

It is ironic, I believe, that we should have to insist that the President of the United States do this because when he was a candidate for President, Mr. Clinton promised to balance the budget in 5 years. He abandoned that promise on being elected. And by the beginning of this year, 2 years after being sworn in, he submitted a budget that would never be balanced, in fact, a budget that would never have deficits of less than \$150 billion a year.

Later, he said perhaps he could do the job in 10 years, then 9, then briefly 7, now back to 10, but that he could only do it if he were allowed to set the assumptions, to play with the statistics, so that balancing the budget would become an easy task without any significant changes in spending policies in the United States, a tactic which has been used briefly by Presidents, both Democrat and Republican, with unsurprising results—increasing rather than decreasing budget deficits.

In addition, the proposal which we have been debating today, the reconciliation bill which will come before this body before the end of the week and be sent to the President before the end of the week, does much more to keep the President's original promises than simply to balance the budget, as important and difficult as that task is. It also keeps the President's promises, since abandoned, to provide a tax cut for middle-income Americans, and it will also keep the President's promise, to which he continues to give lip service and little more, to end welfare as we have known it.

It is over a bill that will carry out these promises of the President of the United States that all of the current furor takes place.

Rather than to promise to sign that bill, the President has committed himself to vetoing it. As of the moment at which I speak, he has vetoed one of the two much more modest interim measures that would allow him both time to veto that bill and to discuss with Members of Congress what alternative approach to the same goal he would adopt without causing the Government of the United States to come to a halt.

I am not sure precisely what the consequences of this course of action will be. Two bills, one of which has already been vetoed by the President and one of which is likely to be passed here later today and vetoed before the evening is up, will cause a certain degree of disruption. A veto of the reconciliation bill, a repudiation of the President's three promises, will, I suspect, cause somewhat more in the way of disruption because it will be the last of a series of actions on the part of the President that belie his promises and commitments as a candidate in the early days of his Presidency.

So far, the President has been unwilling, in any rational and thoughtful fashion, to discuss these goals. So far, he simply says he will not even begin to discuss them until preconditions are met which guarantee that he will never have to discuss them seriously. I suspect, however, that as has been the case so frequently in the past, once the shoe begins to pinch, the President will be willing to discuss this serious question, and I believe he will find Members on this side of the aisle willing to discuss everything with him except for the underlying premise that we must come up with a realistic method of balancing the budget. Once that principle has been reached, we can reach an agreement and the President can use one of those hundreds of thousands of pens to sign a balanced budget.

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

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

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, we are in morning business, is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct, with time limits of 10 minutes.

A SHUTDOWN OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, let me comment on some of the discussion that has taken place on the floor of the Senate today. First of all, I think if there is a shutdown of the Federal Government, there will be no credit in any corner of this town, only blame and, in my judgment, justifiable blame. We ought not be at this position. We should not get to the point of a shutdown of Government services. We