

hang Congress up and have the Government shut down and default on debt in the next couple of weeks. Let us have this debate about priorities. But let us do that in December on the reconciliation bill.

But I did want to take the floor today simply to say this is not as it is characterized by some as one side of the aisle wanting to cut spending and the other side does not. I think I have just demonstrated in at least one of the largest areas of Federal spending where there is precious little appetite to do anything other than to spend more by conservatives who come to the floor. It is a big jobs program. There is no belt-tightening when that bill comes up.

I hope when we debate and sort through these priorities in the middle of December and write a reconciliation bill that we will do the best with what each side wants: expanding economy, more jobs, and better opportunity in the private sector. We also want to ensure fairness in the spending priorities and budget priorities here in the Congress.

I think when Kevin Phillips, who is not a Democrat—a Republican—evaluates the set of priorities that is brought to us now by the Republicans, it demonstrates once again that there is plenty of room for disagreement, and I think also plenty of room for compromise hopefully in the middle of December when the American people would expect us to reach agreement. But, between now and then, there is no excuse to have the Government shut down or to have a default at the end of this evening.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

PAYMENT OF VETERANS' BENEFITS

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I was in Amarillo, TX, this weekend dedicating a veterans' hospital addition, and I met a couple from Friona, TX. He is a disabled veteran. They were concerned about news reports they had heard over the weekend that veterans' benefits would not be paid if the Government is shut down.

I am taking to the floor because I want to make sure that the veteran from Friona, TX, and every other veteran in this country knows that veterans' benefits will be paid December 1 unless this administration decides that that is not the priority. I hope this administration will not do that.

Veterans' benefits are a priority. Veterans' benefits are an entitlement. Never before have veterans' benefits not been paid when there has been a temporary shutdown of Government.

So I came back to make sure. I talked to the budget committees. I talked to the veterans' committees. We consulted the Congressional Research Office to see if there was any merit in this alleged nonpayment of veterans' benefits, and in fact we were told that they had never heard of anything like that. And in fact unless the adminis-

tration made the decision affirmatively to pay welfare recipients but not veterans, that in fact veterans would be paid.

So I wish to take the floor to tell the veterans of this country that most certainly they will be paid. There is cash flow to do that regardless of whether there is a continuing resolution or if the President vetoes the continuing resolution there are funds to pay the veterans' benefits, the next ones of which go out December 1. So I think it would be highly appropriate if the Veterans Administration would reassure the veterans of that because they are getting mixed signals.

In my home State of Texas, some veterans' offices are saying, of course, checks are going to go out, and some Veterans Administration offices are saying they do not know; that it is up in the air. And then there are reports that reporters calling the Veterans Administration here are getting the word that they will not go out. So there is confusion by the administration on this point. But there is no confusion on the part of Congress that veterans' pay is absolutely essential, that it is covered, and that the checks will go out December 1.

So I hope that the Veterans' Administration will, indeed, clarify this so that our veterans are not worried that their payments are of lesser stature than those of welfare recipients in this country.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

REPUBLICAN PLAN

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, while I was presiding, I was desirous of responding to some of the things that had been said about the subject of this morning's business by a number of the Members of the Congress, specifically one from North Dakota.

During the course of his remarks, he talked about a plan, about the fact that the Republicans have talked about the plan that we had that we are going to discuss, that we have sent to the President that will reach a balanced budget in a period of 7 years, as if somebody else had a plan. I suggest that there is no other plan. If there is a plan, I have not seen it.

The Senator was talking about repeating some of the things that had been said over and over again having to do with reducing Medicare in order to give tax breaks to the rich. I want to say, every time I hear that, that the Republicans had no intention at any point of reducing Medicare. The Republicans gave a program that would have the effect of increasing Medicare by approximately 6.4 percent each year. That would be if a person were getting the maximum Medicare, as accorded today under the current law. That person would receive \$4,800 a year. At the end of the 7-year period, that same individual would be getting \$6,700 a year.

There is no way to say that that could be considered as a cut in Medi-

care. To say over and over and over again, with redundancy that is unbearable, that the Republicans are going to try to use cuts in Medicare—which I just talked about, that there are no cuts in Medicare—to give tax breaks to the rich is being unreasonable. Mr. President, 90 percent of the tax breaks that would come from a \$500 tax credit per child would go to families under \$100,000 of income.

But I want to get down to the point where he was talking about our Nation's defense. He was talking about the Senate bill that was too high, talking about the appropriations bill that was actually some \$7 billion more than asked for by the military. I think we all know, being realistic, that when there is a Democrat in the White House, the military is going to be influenced by what that Democrat or a Republican in the White House might want.

We saw what happened back in the 1970's when we had a Democratic President in Jimmy Carter, and we saw our defense budget going down, going down and, of course, the social programs going up. Until such time as 1980, we did not have enough money for spare parts, and we found it necessary after 1980, up to 1985, to increase spending on defense by about 40 percent.

We do not want that to happen again, and yet we have seen during the course of this administration cuts in our defense budget to the extent that right now we are where we were in 1980.

This concerns me, because right now there is a crisis that is taking place and a decision that has been made by this President to send up to 25,000 troops on to the ground in Bosnia. You can talk about doing this and act like the budget is going to remain static during this time, and yet the foreign policy of this administration has put more and more money into humanitarian gestures, Mr. President, to the extent that he has had to come back to this Congress for emergency supplementals.

This is the position we have found ourselves in: We have a Republican-elected House and Senate. We have control. The Republicans gained control in the 1994 elections. And yet we have a President who sends our troops off on humanitarian missions, having no relativity to our Nation's defense. We sent them off to Somalia. Of course, our troops went to Somalia in December under the last month of the Bush administration. And yet, once that humanitarian mission, as described by President Bush when we sent the troops over to Somalia, was over, we time and time again pleaded with President Clinton to bring our troops back from Somalia. There was no mission there that related to our Nation's security interests. Yet, he did not bring them back and they did not come back until 18 of our troops were murdered in cold blood and dragged through the mud through the streets of Mogadishu.

What we do not want to happen in Bosnia—if you look at what the administration has done to our military—is for them to come back and say we need another billion dollars. They came back for a \$1.4 billion emergency supplemental just to cover these humanitarian missions in places like Somalia, Haiti, Rwanda, and other places. And we are in a position where we did not have a voice in making the decision to spend that money on humanitarian missions, money we have to borrow from future generations, because we are borrowing this money. Yet, we cannot deny the President his request for emergency supplementals, because if we do that, he will take it out of the operating account of our existing military, and, of course, we are down now to a bare bones military system.

I think what is happening right now in Bosnia has a far greater significance than what we have been talking about in just the cost.

I had occasion to spend 6 months in Bosnia. I did it all in 4 days. It was the most miserable 4 days I ever spent. But I learned something while I was there. I looked around and I saw a country that had been pounded and pounded. Yet, we are not real sure who is doing the pounding all that time. We have three warring factions in Bosnia. We have the Croats, the Bosnian Serbs, the Bosnian Moslems. Yet, while the peace talks are going on, I suggest to you that some of the parties causing the problems over in Bosnia are not at the peace table.

So here we are faced with a dilemma where we are going to have to make decisions as to what is taking place over there, and we are going to try to stop the President from sending 25,000 ground troops in there where, certainly, there will be many, many deaths.

I will wind this up by only repeating the words of the commander of the U.N. forces in Bosnia, that British general, Gen. Michael Rose, who said, "If the Americans send troops into Bosnia, they will sustain more losses than they did during the Persian Gulf war." That was 390 losses. I remember when I asked Secretary Christopher and Secretary Perry, "Is whatever we are doing over in Bosnia significant enough—whatever mission that is—for the loss of several hundred—specifically over 400—American lives?" They said, "Yes."

So I think there is the basis of the difference of opinion. Is the mission of containing a civil war and of protecting the integrity of NATO worth several hundred American lives. I say, "no."

That is another debate that is going on now. I would like to advise the President that it is my intention to introduce legislation that is going to make it more difficult for him to send troops into Bosnia on the ground.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GRASSLEY). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. 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

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask that the Chair lay before the Senate a message from the House on H.R. 927, a bill to seek international sanctions against the Castro government in Cuba, to plan for support of a transition government leading to a democratically elected government in Cuba, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, That the House disagree to the amendment of the Senate to the bill to seek international sanctions against the Castro government in Cuba, to plan for support of a transition government leading to a democratically elected government in Cuba, and for other purposes", and ask a conference with the Senate on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon.

Ordered, That Mr. Gilman, Mr. Burton of Indiana, Ms. Ros-Lehtinen, Mr. King, Mr. Diaz-Balart, Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Gejdenson, Mr. Torricelli, and Mr. Menendez be the managers of the conference on the part of the House.

Mr. DODD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate on the pending matter for such time as I may consume.

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

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to debate the message from the House requesting a conference on H.R. 927, the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1995, and the naming of conferees.

I find it somewhat remarkable that today, of all days, we are being asked to deal with this matter, of all matters. I would have thought that today we would be devoting ourselves instead to finding our way out of the serious box we have fallen into over the budget impasse.

Let us remember what is about to occur shortly in this Chamber. As of midnight tonight, the Federal Government ceases all but essential services. Likewise, the Government's ability to borrow shortly will be exhausted. Keeping our Government operating and keeping the U.S. Treasury solvent should, in my view, be the only business of this body today. Even if it were not in the throes of a critical fiscal crisis, I would still argue the priorities of the leadership in taking up this particular bill at this juncture.

The Senate, as my colleagues will recall, has already exhausted 5 days debating this bill. There is no pressing

reason why we must turn to it again now or go to a conference today or tomorrow. It is not as though the Senate has nothing else to do. We have yet to complete the bulk of the so-called must-pass legislation for this year. To date, we have completed action on only 4 of the 13 appropriations bills that we must enact—only 4 of the 13. We have yet to complete action on budget reconciliation, on welfare reform, on Medicaid and Medicare reform.

Instead, here we are debating going to conference with the House on legislation that has no particular urgency to it whatsoever. Fidel Castro has been around for more than three decades. I do not think anyone seriously believes that this legislation is likely to markedly alter his status or the current situation in Cuba any time soon, no matter how much we may wish it so. In fact, as I argued when the Senate spent 5 days debating this bill last month, I believe this legislation is fatally flawed.

In this case of the House-passed version, this bill would actually do serious damage to the United States, especially to our Federal courts. Frankly, Mr. President, this legislation is nothing more than special interest legislation par excellence. It is particularly ironic, Mr. President, that we should be here today deliberating legislation that falls within the jurisdiction of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

As I am sure my colleagues are aware, the Foreign Relations Committee has been basically shut down for the past 3 months by the chairman of the committee, with the concurrence of the majority leader. Eighteen ambassadorial nominees, nominees to China, South Africa, Pakistan, the Philippines, and several dozens of treaties, including START II and the Chemical Weapons Convention, have been held hostage by the chairman of the committee until he secures passage on S. 908, the State Department reorganization legislation.

The distinguished chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has been unable to pass that legislation to date because in its current form it does not enjoy bipartisan support. I appreciate the fact that the Senator from North Carolina is unhappy that he cannot get his bill passed. That circumstance, Mr. President, happens to all of us in this body from time to time. However, I believe it is the height of irresponsibility to hold up nearly all the other business of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee over one piece of legislation. I believe the action is almost unprecedented, if not in fact unprecedented.

I, for one, would argue that it is far more important that the United States be ably represented abroad at the highest diplomatic levels in countries where there are a great many U.S. interests at stake. China, Pakistan, South Africa, Indonesia—these are all countries of critical importance to the