

continuing resolution that would perhaps address the concerns of the Defense Department. Hopefully, that will not be necessary because not only has the President been sent today from the Congress the Department of Treasury and Postal Service appropriations bills, which he indicated perhaps he will sign, I believe, and the legislative appropriations bill, which he indicated maybe he will sign, we also sent him a very important, very large Department of Defense appropriations bill. If he will sign that bill, then all of the Defense Department, our defense people can go back to work.

This is not an indication that this is all we should do or can do or will do. We are just saying that we would like for the Social Security offices, the veterans offices and the Medicare offices to be open. I do not think any Senator wants to object to that.

So we put it on the calendar, and we will have a chance, I am sure, to vote on it at some subsequent point. If I could just make one more point, and then I will yield to the Senator's response, if he feels so inclined.

What is really at stake here? There is a continuing effort by the President to get a continuing spending resolution. The President wants more spending available to him. What we are trying to get is a commitment to the balanced budget in 7 years with honest numbers. That is all we are trying to accomplish.

Now, discussions continue, are underway. There have been conversations today across the aisle with both sides of the Congress and with the White House. I am hopeful that something could be worked out where the President can agree to the 7-year balanced budget as certified by the Congressional Budget Office so we can make sure the numbers are allowed, and maybe that will happen. There are a number of ways that we can continue to work together and get the Government open. Certainly we should get these very important offices open on Monday. The House has already voted that way.

I would be glad to yield to the leader.

Mr. DASCHLE. I thank my friend for yielding. I would just ask the distinguished Senator from Mississippi, my friend, whether he is aware that the President has already made an announcement that all of those people will be going back to work on Monday, making the resolution as he has proposed it unnecessary?

The second question I would ask is, why, even if he thought it was necessary—perhaps he was not aware of the President's announcement—why would he feel the need to open the offices in Social Security and other branches and maintain closure of small business offices around the country, the Federal Housing Administration? Why would he see the need to keep the National Institutes of Health and a number of other Federal agencies that I would think he would view as equally important, closed down? What I tried

to do in my subsequent unanimous consent agreement, to which the Senator objected, was to open those offices, too. How does the Senator draw the distinction?

Mr. LOTT. If the President as a matter of fact has been moving to open these offices, certainly it makes good sense to me that the Congress would concur and put that into law. But I might respond to the Senator, why did the President stop with these offices? Why did he not go further? Every one of these things cut both ways.

I think it is important to note that the other side of the aisle has objected to moving to this targeted continuing resolution. This bill would provide sufficient funding—until the relevant appropriations bills are signed into law, or if necessary, for the remainder of FY96—to allow HCFA to pay claims filed by Medicare contractors, the Social Security Administration to meet its administrative expenses, and the Department of Veterans Affairs to process and disburse veterans compensation, pensions, and dependency and indemnity compensation payments. The minority leader points out that the President has sent an Executive order sending many of these workers back to work; however, it is important to note that the President's Executive order does not provide funding for these employees. This, I believe, is a very important distinction.

I think what we need to do is quit arguing about what should be open and what should not be open, get an agreement to do that, and get a commitment to a 7-year balanced budget with honest numbers. That is what really is at stake, and we are hopefully very close.

The leader, I believe, has had indications by many Members on his side they want a 7-year balanced budget. The ranking member on the Budget Committee in the House indicated that he supports that. I think there is growing support in the Congress to get that commitment agreed to, go with honest numbers and pass a continuing resolution that will allow the spending to continue while we get a way to control the budget that has been out of control for 30 years.

Mr. DASCHLE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished Democratic leader.

Mr. DASCHLE. Let me just respond, and I know others seek the floor, so I will not belabor this point. This issue is not about a 7-year balanced budget. The Senator from Mississippi knows it. This issue is about whether or not we can make Government function while we debate the critical issues behind the issue of a 7-year balanced budget. I think we could get broad-based support for a 7-year balanced budget if we could also get broad-based support for what that means—what the budgetary values priorities defining that budget are.

What does it mean? What so many on the other side seem to be arguing is that we have to come to the bottom

line before we know what the components are. If the Senator will tell me exactly what the tax cut figure will be, exactly what the growth assumptions will be, exactly what all the cuts in entitlements will be, exactly what we can anticipate in terms of freezes on discretionary spending, then we can probably get some better appreciation of whether it is going to take 7 years or 8 years or what. Seven years is fine with most of us, 5 years, 4 years might work, depending on the assumptions and priorities entailed, but that is not the issue. We have to consider all the components of the budget as we debate this issue.

The real debate will begin almost immediately because the President will be vetoing the reconciliation bill that we passed last night. So we are left now with the realization that if we are serious about doing this the right and responsible way, we need to put the rhetoric aside and get down to making some very tough decisions about whether we can do all that everybody says they want to do in 7 years. We better start negotiating for real on that reconciliation bill. That is the issue. The continuing resolution debate ought to be behind us because that really should not going be the issue any longer.

The issue is, can we seriously debate our goals in reconciliation. If we can do that, if we can sit down in a bipartisan way, then I believe we can accomplish our task. But the longer we debate this continuing resolution, the longer we decide we have yet another iteration, another alternative, another way to play political games with a document that ought to fund Government for whatever length of time it is going to take to get the real job done, the less the real job is a real possibility.

So I hope that we could both agree to that. I will agree with what the Senator said about the ongoing effort to try to resolve this matter.

I must really commend him and Senator DOMENICI, the distinguished Senator from New Mexico, the chair of the Budget Committee, and others who have been working diligently all day long in an effort to find some resolution. I think we are very close on our side. I wish I could say the same for those on the other side. But I do commend them for their work and their effort. I know it is still ongoing. And I hope, even though the odds seem to be diminishing, I hope at some point, even yet today, we could find some resolution. I yield the floor.

THE BALANCED BUDGET ACT

Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I wanted to take a few minutes today to address a few specifics of the Balanced Budget Act passed yesterday by this Chamber. With the time available today, I wanted to offer a few specific thoughts on the agriculture provisions contained in the conference report.

As I have said on previous occasions during this debate, the balanced budget

measure we approved yesterday is a historic moment. I feel strongly that this is among the most important votes that I will cast here, and I am proud that this Congress has the courage and conviction to enact a plan to achieve a true balanced budget.

This is a good plan, and in my estimation, it is a very fair plan; but it is not entirely a perfect plan. An area, for example, that I believe that this Congress has abdicated its responsibility is the reforms of the peanut program that are contained in this bill.

My desire to reform programs such as peanuts and sugar is certainly well known among my colleagues. It is my view that we must curb these subsidies for farmers and investors and bring these programs into line with other, more market oriented agricultural commodities. As a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I have been fighting for reforms in both of these programs. I assure my colleagues that the provisions in this bill are not true reform.

The peanut industry is in a state of serious decline. Consumption and production are falling as a direct result of a failed Government policy that excessively inflates the price of U.S. peanuts to almost twice the world price. It is my goal to make the peanut program operate like other farm programs so peanut farmers will grow peanuts for the market, and not for the Federal Government. Under the current peanut program, artificially high-priced peanuts simply end up being forfeited to the Federal Government.

The peanut provisions contained in the budget reconciliation bill not only fail to reform the peanut quota system, but make a bad program worse by forcing the Secretary of Agriculture to further shrink national production to avoid Government forfeitures.

This summer I introduced S. 1188, a bill that provides for a phasedown of the excessive support price for quota peanuts in order to move the program toward a market orientation. In year 2000, my bill would end the quota system and replace it with a loan program, much like the program we have for soybeans.

The Agriculture Committee, however, chose to include the general commodity programs in the budget reconciliation bill rather than have a farm bill fully debated on the Senate floor. At the time of Agriculture Committee deliberations, I agreed not to oppose the package of peanut provision for inclusion in budget reconciliation in return for some minor reforms in the program.

One of the chief concessions I obtained in the Agriculture Committee reported bill, was a new provision for the release of additional peanuts when market prices for domestic edible peanuts exceeded 120 percent of the quota loan rate. This provision would have placed some cap on the price of peanuts when the Government creates an artificial shortage.

Unfortunately, this provision was ruled out of order under the Byrd rule, while other provisions, such as the extension of lease and transfer of quota, were allowed to be part of final legislative package on peanuts.

My other objective today is to point out the inconsistency in terms of how the Byrd rule was applied against my provisions to reform the peanut program. No one can deny that the Byrd rule was applied selectively to eliminate certain provisions, while other items, such as lease and transfer provisions were allowed to be attached to the budget reconciliation bill. Through procedural maneuvers to protect the peanut program from a floor vote, the Congress has effectively chosen to heavily subsidize a few thousand peanut quota holders at the expense of millions of consumers.

The peanut provisions contained in the bill serve to protect the status quo, while consumers have to pay even more for peanuts because the Secretary of Agriculture will be forced to short the market. In fact, it is estimated that the proposed modifications will effectively increase the cost of peanuts by as much as \$100 per ton. Budget reconciliation provisions that increase the cost of peanut products at a time when the peanut industry is already losing market share are simply bad public policy.

I am disappointed in my colleagues' use of the legislative process to hide the peanut program from the light of public scrutiny. Working to deny floor consideration of peanut program reform has extended the life of this outrageous program for a while longer. Ultimately, I am afraid that the provisions in this bill do a disservice to supporters of the program by further pretending that there is no crisis in the peanut industry.

In stark contrast, some of the reforms that I have proposed would expand national production by allowing American peanut growers to produce for the market rather than the government. Real reform of the peanut program will not only benefit this Nation's consumers, but will help avoid the loss of manufacturing an jobs in my home State of Pennsylvania.

As a Representative of Pennsylvania, one of the largest states in terms of the number of employees related to peanut product manufacturing, I have good reason to be deeply concerned about the loss of jobs that will result from further Government imposed reductions in U.S. peanut production.

Mr. President, it is critical that we have an opportunity to vote for reform of the peanut program on the Senate floor. Consideration of the peanut program to date has been nothing short of denying public scrutiny of an unfair and outdated Government program.

TED STEVENS: A HEARTFELT BIRTHDAY WISH

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, today is an especially happy day for Alaskans, as we join in wishing our senior Senator TED STEVENS a happy 72d birthday, (November 18.) TED, in his 27th year in the Senate, has set an example for how all of us should fight tirelessly for our home States, while still maintaining the wisdom to put the good of the Nation first.

While TED currently ranks eighth in the Senate in overall seniority, third among Republicans, and is just one of 109 Senators who have served in the body for 24 or more years—out of 1,815 members since 1789, he still can be found meeting every Alaskan Close-Up student group or talking with residents about health concerns.

His encyclopedic knowledge of Federal-Alaska State relations is legendary in Washington. In the Senate, which has lost much of its institutional memory, TED is able to offer insights on everything from passage of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Act, to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, from passage of the Magnuson Fisheries Conservation Act to the Alaska Lands Act.

His recollection of events is so extraordinary not only because he helped draft the Alaska Statehood Act while serving at the Department of Interior during the Eisenhower administration, but because he has had a hand in virtually every Federal issue affecting Alaska over the past three decades.

While TED served 8 years as assistant Republican leader, whip, handling key national issues, especially defense matters, he is respected as a fierce defender of Alaska interests. He especially has been willing to put aside personal ambition for the good of his State.

Many forget that TED sacrificed his seniority on the Commerce Committee to move to the Energy and Natural Resources Committee during the key fight over the Alaska Land Act. He then moved back to Commerce to represent Alaska fisherman—prove positive that TED always puts Alaska first. It is only justice that he is today chairman of the Committee on Governmental Affairs—the panel upon which he has labored for years to the great benefit of Alaskans.

Certainly no Alaskan has done more during his career than TED STEVENS. A Harvard Law School graduate, an Air Force veteran who saw service in China during WW II, the chief counsel to the U.S. Department of Interior, a member of the Alaska House of Representatives who served as speaker tempore and majority leader, and U.S. Senator. TED STEVENS is a model of public service to his State and Nation and an inspiration for all of us.

I, join with all Alaskans, to thank him for his skill, drive, and dedication during his years in Washington and offer him a heartfelt good wish for many, many more years of service to the State and Nation. Nancy joins me