

BALANCE THE BUDGET

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I, too, commend all the Members of the Senate and the House that have labored to try to resolve this dilemma, but I take just a moment, if I might, Mr. President, and step back from it.

I have just returned from Georgia, and many of the citizens I talked to are somewhat concerned. There is an anxiousness as to just what is happening here. I think it is very important that we remember that the ultimate issue that has driven all of these events for the last several days is whether or not the United States is going to balance its budget or not after 30 years of not doing so.

Just the other evening, in a very historic vote, 52 to 47, the U.S. Senate passed a balanced budget, the first one in 3 decades. The House has done the same.

The President has said he will veto this balanced budget, which is perplexing because, first of all, if any message came out of the last election it was that the American people want their budgets balanced. They deal with it in their family, they deal with it in their business, and they simply do not understand a Federal Government that cannot manage itself. They want the budgets balanced.

The President, in 1992, as he ran for President, promised the American people that he would balance the budget in 5 years. The proposal that he has been sent balances the budget in 7 years.

This Congress, the 104th Congress, came from the elections to balance the budgets. They have fulfilled that promise. It is time for the President to do the same. He has said repeatedly, as I said, in 1992 he was for a balanced budget in 5 years. He then said he would submit a balanced budget in 10 years. I think he has mentioned every number in between at one time or another.

The point is that he has never—never—submitted a budget in balance, which is, of course, why, when his budget came before the Senate, it was rejected, on one occasion, 99 to 0, and on the next, 96 to 0.

This is not just a contest or philosophies and the like, Mr. President. The Bipartisan Entitlement Commission appointed by the President, chaired by a member of his own party, Senator KERREY of Nebraska, cochaired by Senator DANFORTH of Missouri, told the Nation in the beginning of this year that within a decade—that is on all of our watch—within a decade all the vast resources of the United States will be consumed by only five of our programs.

It is almost difficult to imagine all the vast resources of the United States being consumed by just five programs, but they are. They are Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, Federal retirement, and the interest on our debt—and then there is nothing else. That would be a travesty, for this generation to be the first generation of Americans that gave the country to the future

crippled and unable to manage itself. How could we even imagine doing that to future generations, the children and grandchildren yet to come? No generation of Americans has ever willfully—willfully given the future a country crippled, stumbling into the next century.

As sober a message as that is, we need to be reminded that if we seize control of our destiny, if we manage these financial affairs as proposed in this balanced budget, we will enter the next century with more opportunity than one could even imagine or has ever known or seen before. We will be putting resources back in the American family because we will lower the devastating interest rates they pay on their home mortgage, on their car, on borrowing, on their student loans. We will dramatically shorten the lines for employment because we will have an expanding economy with vast new opportunities. And, I might say, we should remember that, as the world's greatest power, we will then enter the next century with the muscle to back it up. What would some of these world rogues rather see than the United States crippled economically, stumbling into that century? We should never give them that opportunity.

I saw a fact sheet just the other day and I have asked it be expanded. The balanced budget that we have submitted, if ratified, would save, over the next 7 years, my State of Georgia \$333 million in debt service. It would save my capital city, in which I live, \$121 million in debt service.

As I said a moment ago, it will save every Georgia family nearly \$2,000 to \$3,000. That means we, in effect, will have increased their disposable income between 10 percent and 20 percent. Who else is getting a raise like that? What a bonus we could give the American family by simply being responsible.

So, while we are talking about shutdown and the like, and the disputes and the meetings that are going on, let us just remember, this is about a Congress that is intent on balancing the budget of the United States so we can save the integrity of the Union for the future, for a new century.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

CONGRESSIONAL PAY

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I rise today on an issue that is related to this shutdown, and that is the issue of pay. I want to express my very deep disappointment that we have not been able to bring up the legislation which I proposed that would treat the pay for Members of Congress and the President in the same manner the pay is being treated for Federal employees who are currently working and who will find their paycheck is suspended during this period of a shutdown.

I worked on this legislation in conjunction with the Senate majority

leader, who supports it, and with Senator BOXER, who proposed similar legislation for future shutdowns. I wanted to be sure that this issue also applied to this current shutdown, so my legislation would make it retroactive.

I have 24 Members of the Senate who support this legislation, who have co-sponsored it. Besides myself, the Senate majority leader, Senator BOXER, Senators THOMAS, WARNER, KEMPTHORNE, GRASSLEY, MCCAIN, COHEN, ABRAHAM, CHAFEE, JEFFORDS, PRESSLER, NICKLES, SIMPSON, SPECTER, HUTCHISON, DOMENICI, DEWINE, KASSEBAUM, BROWN, CRAIG, COATS, and HARKIN.

Here we stand today. We have had a session yesterday and we had a session today and we will have sessions tomorrow, hopefully, to resolve this shutdown.

In the meantime, there is a tremendous disparity between Federal employees who are working, like our staffs, and other Federal employees, and those, of course, who are furloughed, and Members of Congress and the President. You might ask, what is the disparity? The fact is, Members of Congress will not face any disruption in their pay, yet those Federal employees who are working are going to face a disruption. Their pay will lapse during this period of time.

You might ask, why such a discrepancy? That is a very good question. That is why I proposed this legislation. Unfortunately, we cannot reach a consensus among all Senators about bringing this legislation up for immediate consideration. I find it somewhat ironic, because at the beginning of this Congress, setting off in a new direction and a new course, the very first bill that this Senate and this House considered was the Congressional Accountability Act. That would require that the laws that apply to the rest of society would also apply to the U.S. Congress.

I cannot think of a greater example than right here, where we could put our money where our mouth is. Yet, unfortunately, we are back to the same old procedures and business as usual. We are still preserving the status quo when it comes to how Members of Congress are treated, and the President, vis-a-vis the rest of society. In this case, it happens to be Federal employees.

I would think every Senator would support this legislation. After all, hundreds of thousands of Federal employees and their families are going to face serious economic disruption, hardships, inconveniences. Yet Members of Congress will not. I do not see the equity in such an example. I do not see the fairness. I do not see the responsibility. Because each of us, individually and collectively, has a responsibility to this institution and to preserving the integrity of this institution.

The very thing we should be preserving is the public's confidence in the way we do business. Obviously, it has

suffered during this current shutdown. But, at the very least, we can say yes, we are going to face similar problems, similar inconveniences as to those Federal employees who will find their paycheck has lapsed. Unfortunately, we are not going to find that unless this legislation is brought up for immediate consideration and ultimately passed.

Unfortunately, as I said, we have objections from others who do not support this approach. I find that remarkable, given the conversations I have had with Federal employees and even my own staff, in what they are going to be facing because they will not have the assurance of a steady paycheck.

There are many people who have to live paycheck to paycheck. I think at the very least we ought to be setting an example, and not setting ourselves apart as somehow isolated from the problems that are associated with this current Government shutdown.

As the Senator from Arizona was just saying, Senator McCAIN, what about the businesses—the many businesses, the hotels and the restaurants that are associated, that depend on Federal employees working, whether it is here or the Grand Canyon? They will never recover their losses.

So what we are saying here is at least we ought to be experiencing some problems as a result of this shutdown, the same problems that others are experiencing, and certainly with respect to Federal employees. Tomorrow is another payday period. Again, there is a difference between how Members of the Congress and the President are being treated versus Federal employees. The difference will be that those Federal employees who are working currently will see a reduction in their pay, but Members of Congress and the President will not.

I hope, Mr. President, that we will find on our calendar this legislation because I think it is important to provide confidence in this institution, and the direction this country is taking, but also to restore the public's trust in its elected officials. And I hope that we will try to set an example by sharing in the same undue burdens that are being placed on Federal employees and their families. Those same burdens should be placed on Members of Congress and the President.

So I hope that every Member of this body will consent to providing for the consideration of this legislation on the calendar tomorrow.

I yield the floor, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BROWN. Thank you, Mr. President.

MEMBERS' OBLIGATION TO BALANCE THE BUDGET

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I rise to share some thoughts with fellow Senators with regard to the nature of this problem. I do not think it is any mystery to most Members of the Senate why we are here.

Yet, as I hear this issue discussed in the national media, sometimes the real crux of the problem is missed. It can be summed up by taking a look at the reference in one of the documents provided in the last budget round. Interestingly enough, that document was provided by the President of the United States. Included in the information on the back page is this figure. It is an answer to a question of what the child born today would have to pay in the way of taxes to maintain the current programs that we have in place. Mr. President, that figure is calculated by a straightforward calculation that assumes there are absolutely no new programs added. That has never happened.

In the last quarter of century we have never had a time where we have not added new programs or expenditures. It assumes there are no emergencies. Even assuming no emergencies and no new programs, the child born today will pay 82 percent of everything they earn in their entire life in taxes simply to honor the current programs that are on the books.

Mr. President, let me repeat that, because I think that number must astound most people. It astounds me when I look at it. Eighty-two percent, according to the President's own numbers, will have to be paid in taxes simply to honor the existing programs we have.

The short answer of why that is true is simply because we have passed in prior years programs that are open-ended, that spend out automatically what are called entitlements that continue to increase automatically, and will take a larger and larger share of our gross domestic product.

We are here today because there is a crisis, and that crisis is that Congresses in the past have obligated future generations to a point where 82 percent of everything a child earns will have to be paid to the Federal Government just to honor existing programs.

Mr. President, there is no person, liberal or conservative, Democrat or Republican, who can look at that figure and imagine that America will be competitive with 82 percent of everything we produce being paid in taxes. It will destroy incentive. It will destroy our competitiveness in world markets. And anyone who comes to this floor and fails to recognize the desperate need for us to address these programs is simply not taking a look at the facts.

The facts also show we have the biggest deficit of any country in the world. We have the biggest debt of any country in the world—almost \$5 trillion. We have the biggest trade deficit of any country in the world. We have one of the lowest savings rates of any major industrialized country on the face of the Earth.

Mr. President, when you look at the facts they are awesome. I hope Members of the Senate who have come to the floor and said no action is necessary will think again. If America is to remain strong, viable, competitive,

and provide a future for our children other than 82 percent of everything they earn paid in taxes, we have to change. All the rhetoric cannot hide the fact that our future is dismal unless we change it. It is why I think there is such optimism in the country over the willingness of Congress to stand fast and insist on changes.

Mr. President, the distinguished Senator from Maine mentioned her bill which would place Members of Congress in the same circumstance as other Federal employees when we have a shutdown like this. I am proud to be a cosponsor of it. I very much hope it passes. When it comes to the floor for consideration, I want to add an additional amendment. I do not pretend that it will be popular. But I think it is along that same line, along the line we treat ourselves like everyone else; and, that is this:

For over a quarter of a century this Congress has passed budgets and ignored them. They have come up with phony estimates, and then they have overspent the budgets time and time again. Some of the Members who talk the loudest and the longest about balancing the budget happily turn around and then vote to exceed the budget each year. That is why we need an incentive. That is why we need the constitutional amendment to balance the budget recognizing the fact that Congress has been unable to face the reality that calls for difficult decisions.

I cannot imagine anyone in private thinking other than the fact that we have to have some discipline. And while some Members have shied away from a constitutional limitation—as the distinguished Presiding Officer recalls, we were one vote away from referring that constitutional amendment out to the States—I believe some discipline is possible. And it relates to the way private sectors are treated.

Mr. President, the proposal is going to be simply this: If we meet our budget targets in passing the budget this year, our pay stays the same. But, if we fail to meet them, for every \$5 billion we realize in debt that is over that target, we would lose 1 percent of our pay. So if it is \$10 billion over, we lose 10 percent. If we are \$20 billion over, we would lose 4 percent. This would cap out at a 30-percent pay reduction.

Mr. President, this will provide the real incentive because it will provide that Members of Congress will pay a personal price when they do harm to the fiscal soundness of this Nation, and the future of our children. We will have a direct financial interest in seeing that we meet our budget targets. Is it dire action? Yes, possibly. Is it essential? Mr. President, I believe it is essential.

I do not know whether that measure is going to pass or not. But I do know that some discipline is essential, and in a way this treats us exactly like the private sector. You see, if a private business does not perform, the owners and the employees are penalized in