

enemy submarines in the Atlantic, and for maintaining fuel tank pressure and rocket engines for the fledgling space program at the time.

The 1960 act created incentives for private companies to return to the market and, as a result, we finally did have four private natural gas producing companies building five helium extraction facilities, and they entered the market.

What is happening now, as of 1995, is that 90 percent of the helium produced in this country does come from these private operations.

Unfortunately, though, the 1960 act also led to a growing Government-run operation and the stockpiling of helium purchased by the Federal Government.

The act also stipulated that the Bureau of Mines set prices that would cover all of this Government-run program's costs, including its debt and interest, and that Federal agencies and contractors were then required to buy helium from the Bureau of Mines.

Today, Mr. President, that debt is approximately \$1.4 billion, and some have suggested that our current stockpile could supply the Government's needs, if you can believe it, for the next 80 to 100 years. Although the proponents of the program have a complicated argument about how this program does not really cost the Federal Government any money, the point is that the Federal Government does not need to run a helium program anymore. There is a private sector helium industry that can and does provide the necessary helium to the Government.

By terminating the program now, Mr. President, selling off the helium reserves over time to ensure that the taxpayers receive a fair price for the helium they have financed, we can pay off the debt and, according to the CBO, we could recover between \$1 and \$1.6 billion from the reserves if sold at current prices. CBO also believes that we can double annual revenues from the program by doing this over time.

Mr. President, achieving deficit reduction is a very difficult task. Programs like the helium program were created to meet certain needs. The defenders of the program have a variety of arguments to justify its continued existence, but the reality is that it appears over and over again on target lists for deficit reduction because it no longer makes any sense for the Federal Government to continue to run this program. It has not been terminated despite attempts of the Reagan, Bush, and now the Clinton administration because powerful constituencies fight to keep these types of programs alive.

Mr. President we simply cannot afford to keep these programs going. The 104th Congress should be the place where this program is terminated.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the article I referred to earlier from the Washington Post February 7, 1995, business section relating to the helium program be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the editorial was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Washington Post, Feb. 7, 1995]

ODORLESS, COLORLESS—AND HARD TO KILL
(By Cindy Skrzycki)

Deep in the earth near Amarillo, Tex., the federal government is sitting on a 32 billion-cubic-foot stash of crude helium—enough to last 100 years—and an inflated bureaucracy built on the premise that you can never have too much helium.

President Clinton burst the balloons of the helium reserve program's 195 workers in his budget request yesterday, singling out the federal program as one that had outlived its usefulness and proposing that it be phased out. Estimated savings: \$16 million by 2000.

The program dates back to the observation balloons of World War I and got another boost in 1960, when Congress and the Eisenhower administration feared there would not be enough helium for Cold War strategic uses, including the expanding space program. The program's debt to the U.S. Treasury has grown from \$252 million to \$1.3 billion—just as impressive as the supply of helium in its Texas stockpile.

Yesterday, Clinton proposed canceling the debt, saying that it would not affect the federal budget deficit.

Its tale is one of yet another federal government program that has had more than nine lives. The program has ducked budget cutters in the Reagan, Bush and Clinton administration, allowing employees such as Armond Sonnek, assistant director for helium, and Dale Bippus, the plant's general manager, to amass about 75 years of combined federal service until their recent retirements. Still on the job is John D. Morgan Jr., 74, chief staff officer of the Interior Department's Bureau of Mines, who can trace the origins and applications of helium in his head.

Ironically, the helium program escaped its latest brush with death in the name of stemming the growth of the deficit. Just when it looked like getting rid of the program was what Clinton-style reinvention of government was all about, the now-defeated congressman from Amarillo, Democrat Bill Sarpalius, became a key vote for the president when Clinton was trying to pass his contentious budget bill in 1993.

After Sarpalius voted with the president—providing Clinton's 218 to 216 margin of victory—the program was floating high again. The administration offered legislation to cancel the program's debt and make it more efficient. The measure never got off the ground.

Now, the administration proposes getting out of the helium business, liquidating the stockpile and selling the production facility in Amarillo.

That would end the government's involvement in helium, which began in 1971, when the Bureau of Mines began researching uses of the odorless gas for the military. Research and production continued through World War II, when the government used blimps to spot enemy submarines in the Atlantic Ocean. Even now, though using helium for blimps is a tiny portion of its consumption, the airships are used for surveillance on the U.S. borders and weather observation—and, it has been reported, there may even be a stealth blimp.

The gas, a nonrenewable resource, is more commonly used today for special welding procedures, the fueling process of space shuttles and magnetic resonance imaging. For those applications, it has no replacement.

It wasn't until 1960 that the Cold War scared the government into buying, refining and stockpiling helium. It feared shortages

that would leave the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the Pentagon flat. So the Bureau of Mines became owner and operator of a helium-refining plant, a 425-mile pipeline, railroad cars and an unusual underground helium storage facility.

It filled an underground reservoir called the Cliffside Field, near Amarillo, with helium crude bought from natural gas companies. Helium, which natural gas producers had vented into the air, was being captured and sold to the government.

"It was a good investment," said Carl Johnson, Chairman of the Helium Advisory Council, a trade organization representing the nation's 11 helium producers, refiners and marketers. "Without the helium collected in Cliffside field, the industry wouldn't be as vibrant as it is now."

All this was done with a \$252 million loan from the Treasury to the Interior Department—which has never been repaid. With back interest, the debt has grown to \$1.3 billion. The program was intended to be self-supporting through the sale of helium, but sales projections proved too optimistic.

In the minds of some, such as officials at the General Accounting Office, the debt doesn't exist—it was merely an intergovernmental transaction between the Treasury and the late Fred Andrew Seaton, President Dwight D. Eisenhower's interior secretary, who signed the note.

Helium program staffers like to think they cost the government no money since the program covers its operating costs and, in 1994, returned \$10 million to the federal till. Plus, they point out, the government does own 32 billion cubic feet of crude, unrefined helium which, at current prices, is worth about \$600 million.

"Our employees think they are giving money back to the taxpayer," said David Barna, spokesman for the Bureau of Mines. "They feel pretty good about it."

There is some dispute over how the government should phase out the helium program. The companies that now supply 90 percent of the market don't want the government opening the spigot and depressing prices. After all, how many Barney balloons can you sell? There also is a vocal constituency for paying back the loan from the sale of the crude.

An administration source said the government wants to "sell into a rising market" but it needs to start liquidating. The calculation is that the market could absorb 300 cubic feet of crude helium annually and not be the worse for it.

And, the \$1.3 billion debt?

Ever heard of forgive and forget?

UNITED STATES-CUBAN RELATIONS

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, yesterday, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the Senator from North Carolina, introduced legislation on Cuba which, with all due respect to the chairman, I think is the wrong policy at the wrong time. In seeking to strengthen an already tight trade embargo, punish non-American investment in Cuba, and increase funding for TV Marti, this proposal puts United States policy toward Cuba on the wrong track. While I oppose strongly the totalitarian rule imposed by Cuban President Fidel Castro, I do not see any way that the island Nation of Cuba now poses a military or economic

threat to the United States which warrants such a new hostile policy.

I have believed for some time that an expanded dialog with the Cuban Government is in the interest of the United States and Cuba. With the cold war over and little or no Soviet or Russian presence in Cuba, it simply does not make sense to completely ignore a country in our hemisphere because it is nondemocratic. Indeed, discussions and contacts on issues such as human rights, market economies, commercial relations, arms control, Caribbean affairs, the free flow of information, refugee affairs, and family visitation rights could actually help facilitate resolution of these complex problems and, I think, would do it, Mr. President, far better than nonengagement and isolation.

We have ongoing discussions with other nondemocratic countries like Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, and North Korea, and we recently opened a liaison office in Vietnam. Mr. President, we have even granted most-favored-nation status to China, so it makes little sense to outlaw virtually any contact with Cuba.

This proposal also threatens the United States effectiveness in international organizations by requiring the United States representatives to seek a United Nations embargo against Cuba and to oppose Cuban membership in international financial institutions. Mr. President, the United States has more important and pressing problems which require multilateral support and should not be required to pursue an outdated and misguided policy in an international forum.

Finally, Mr. President, I am particularly amused by the support of the Senator from North Carolina for more money for TV Marti. This program has been documented time and time again as ineffective. Certainly in times of serious fiscal constraint TV Marti should be eliminated; it should not be enlarged. It is very ironic that during the debate on the balanced budget amendment, when we are all claiming we are going to identify more specific cuts and cut out the fat in Government, here is a proposal which exemplifies the waste that has helped jack up the Federal deficit in the first place.

Mr. President, the chairman's proposal is provocative but it is unrealistic and shortsighted. I hope the administration will work with partners in the hemisphere to develop a multilateral strategy to promote democracy and human rights in Cuba and prepare for that day to which we all look forward, the transition of power in Cuba.

I thank the Chair and I yield the floor.

Mr. ROBB addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized to speak as if in morning business for not to exceed 4 minutes.

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

Mr. ROBB. I thank the Chair.

THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INVASION AT IWO JIMA

Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, today marks an important anniversary for all of us who served in the Marine Corps and for freedom-loving Americans everywhere. On this date 50 years ago, the largest force of U.S. marines ever assembled prepared to embark on the most savage and most costly battle in the history of the Marine Corps. Nearly 100,000 troops, American and Japanese, were ready to fight to the death on the most heavily fortified island in the world, 8 square miles of volcanic ash and rock known as Iwo Jima.

Since the turn of the century, marines had pioneered and developed the capability for seizing advanced naval bases. The payoff for those many years of planning and training was seen in the successive, hard-fought victories in the amphibious landings throughout the Pacific in places like Guadalcanal, Bougainville, Tarawa, and New Britain, and on Saipan, Guam, Tinian, and Peleliu.

But now in February 1945 marine forces were approaching within 1,000 miles of the Japanese homeland for the first time and would face a determined, fanatically brave enemy who had constructed the most elaborate and ingenious system of underground fortifications ever devised. Despite thorough allied planning and preparation and all the naval and air support available, it was ultimately the marine on the beach with the rifle who eventually won this critical battle for America.

Mr. President, one out of every three marines who set foot on Iwo Jima was killed or wounded, so great was the price of victory. As Gen. Holland M. Smith, Commanding General, Expeditionary Troops, Iwo Jima, said later of his marines, "They took Iwo Jima the hard way, the marine way, the way we had trained them to take it when everything else failed. They took Iwo Jima with sweat, guts, and determination."

Mr. President, I thank the Chair and I yield the floor.

AUTHORIZING BIENNIAL EXPENDITURES BY COMMITTEES OF THE SENATE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of Senate Resolution 73, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 73) authorizing biennial expenditures by committees of the Senate.

The Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, is there a time agreement on this resolution?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. One hour evenly divided.

Mr. STEVENS. I yield myself such time as I may require.

Mr. President, on January 25, the Senate Rules Committee reported a biennial omnibus committee funding resolution. It is Senate Resolution 73 and it is reports No. 104-6.

The Senate has authorized the committee funding on a biennial basis since 1989, primarily due to the good work of my great friend from Kentucky, who is the former chairman of the committee. We have worked together many years now. Senator FORD has insisted on a biennial funding resolution.

The resolution before us today is a biennial funding resolution, and it is consistent with the direction of the conference of the majority to cut committee budgets by 15 percent. Senate Resolution 73 cuts 15 percent from the 1994 total recurring budget authority. It will add 2 percent for a cost-of-living adjustment for the 1995 recurring salaries and authorize a 2.4 percent COLA for 1996 for recurring salaries. There is also a 2.4-percent COLA for January and February 1997. The 1996 and 1997 COLA will be subject to the approval of the President pro tempore of the Senate.

This resolution authorizes \$49,394,804 for the period from March 1, 1995, and September 30, 1996, and \$50,521,131 between March 1, 1996, and February 28, 1997.

Mr. President, this is a reduction of \$7,641,011 from the 1994 funding level.

I have a chart here that shows the change in committee budget authority since 1980, and the Senate will note there has been a considerable shift in budget authority. The real dollar amount is in blue and the dollar amount adjusted for inflation is in orange. You can see that we have maintained a steady decline in the adjusted-for-inflation level of expenditures by the Senate.

We also have a second chart which shows the level of authorized committee staff since 1980. Since last year, the level of committee staff is reduced by 20 percent. In 1994, there were 1,185 authorized committee staff positions, and in 1995 there will be 947.

Again, I wish to point out that we are continuing the good work of my friend, the former chairman, the Senator from Kentucky, Mr. FORD, because these cuts are in addition to the 10-percent decrease that committee budgets took in the last Congress pursuant to his leadership.

Between 1980 and 1994, the Senate committees will have taken a 16.7 percent reduction in staff. I might say the House of Representatives took about a 5 percent reduction during that same time and that fact explains the difference in the amount of reductions currently being taken in the House compared to what we are taking in the Senate this year. But, I believe this additional cut in committee funding is a