

become more aggressive, even when Americans are involved.

The study also found that about 80 percent of those questioned believed that the United Nations had the responsibility to intervene in conflicts marked by genocide. But Americans in the poll and in group discussions indicated that they knew little about the extent and cost of United States participation in peacekeeping.

There was a general perception among those polled that about 40 percent of United Nations peacekeeping troops are American, and that this should be halved to 20 percent. In fact, 4 percent of peacekeepers are American. The absence of television reporting of operations that do not have a substantial American involvement may at least in part explain this misperception.

Asked about the cost to the Federal budget of international peacekeeping, half of the sample in the poll gave a median estimate of 22 percent. Less than 1 percent of the military budget is actually spent on these operations, although Washington is assessed 31 percent of the costs of United Nations peacekeeping operations. Total costs amount to about \$2 billion, the assessment plus supplemental costs, of the \$270 billion Federal military budget.

The study was based on a poll conducted by the Center for International and Security Studies at the University of Maryland and by the independent Center for the Study of Policy Attitudes in Washington.

The results of the study did show some "softening" in support for peacekeeping generally, said Steven Kull, of the Program on International Policy Attitudes at the center. A little more than a year ago, 84 percent of those polled indicated strong support for United Nations peacekeeping. This year, that figure was 67 percent.

But 89 percent of the people polled said that when there was a problem requiring military force, it was best for the United States to work with other countries and the United Nations in dealing with it.

The study questioned 1,204 people through a method known as a random-digit-dial sample, with a margin or error of 3 to 4 percentage points. It also drew on focus-group discussions in Maryland, Michigan, New Mexico and Virginia.

At the Heritage Foundation in Washington, Larry DiRita, deputy director for foreign policy and defense, expressed skepticism of polls that ask about issues like peacekeeping in very broad terms.

"The American people are basically very generous and want to do good," he said in an interview, adding that citizens are quick to respond when faced with images of starvation, violence and displacement. But he said he believed that this changes markedly when people are presented with concrete choices about sending Americans into one dangerous situation or another, especially when they have seen disturbing images on television.

"A general American optimism comes out in polls," he said. "But when faced with reality, they take a more skeptical view."

In the questioning and discussions, a majority of people voiced frustration with the peacekeeping operation in Bosnia and suggested that it eroded the long-term reputation of the United Nations. Mr. Kull said a focus-group comment that "the United Nations has no clout" seemed to reflect the widespread sense that the real problem with peacekeeping was its ineffectiveness.

WAS CONGRESS IRRESPONSIBLE? THE VOTERS HAVE SAID YES

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, more than 3 years ago I began making daily

reports to the Senate making a matter of record the exact Federal debt as of the close of business the previous day.

As of the close of business Friday, April 28, the exact Federal debt stood at \$4,852,327,350,096.60, meaning that on a per capita basis, every man, woman, and child in America owes \$18,419.52 as his or her share of the Federal debt.

It is important to note, Mr. President, that the United States had an opportunity to begin controlling the Federal debt by implementing a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. Unfortunately, the Senate did not seize their first opportunity to control this debt—but rest assured they will have another chance during the 104th Congress.

If Senators do not concentrate on getting a handle on this enormous debt, the voters are not likely to overlook it next year.

THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM'S WORK IN OKLAHOMA CITY

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise today to praise the members of the Montgomery County Maryland Search and Rescue Team for their work in Oklahoma City. This team worked among the death and destruction of Oklahoma City, driven by the hope that they would find another survivor within the tons of debris of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.

I cannot stress the gratitude that I feel as the Senator for Maryland to this group of dedicated heroes, who worked 12 hours a day, for days on end, in their search for survivors. This group concentrated on search and rescue, ignoring the danger of falling debris and the mental agony of this tragedy.

Mr. President, I feel the dedication this team and others like it displayed in Oklahoma City exemplifies the American spirit, a spirit of helping those in need to overcome a crisis. The brave men and women of the Montgomery County Search and Rescue Team placed their lives on the line for their fellow Americans; this is nothing less than an act of heroism.

The Montgomery County team worked at the center of the blast zone of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building by shoring up and removing giant slabs of concrete as members of the Oklahoma City Fire Department removed bodies. Working at the center of the blast zone, at ground zero, was dangerous duty. I know that I speak for all of my colleagues as I recognize this Montgomery County team because they were an example of the many dedicated Americans who came from all across the Nation to lend a helping hand in the wake of this disaster.

Mr. President, I conclude my remarks today by passing along to the Montgomery County Search and Rescue Team a much deserved thank you for a job well done. Thank you for restoring the notion that the American

spirit is still alive and well. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

COMMONSENSE PRODUCT LIABILITY AND LEGAL REFORM ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of H.R. 956, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 956) to establish legal standards and procedures for product liability litigation, and for other purposes.

The Senate resumed consideration of the bill.

Pending:

(1) Gorton amendment No. 596, in the nature of a substitute.

(2) McConnell amendment No. 603 (to amendment No. 596) to reform the health care liability system and improve health care quality through the establishment of quality assurance programs.

(3) Thomas amendment No. 604 (to amendment No. 603) to provide for the consideration of health care liability claims relating to certain obstetric services.

(4) Wellstone amendment No. 605 (to amendment No. 603) to revise provisions regarding reports on medical malpractice data and access to certain information.

(5) Snowe amendment No. 608 (to amendment No. 603) to limit the amount of punitive damages that may be awarded in a health care liability action.

(6) Kyl amendment No. 609 (to amendment No. 603) to provide for full compensation for noneconomic losses in civil actions.

Mr. GORTON addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, the balance of the day will be used to debate the McConnell amendment which proposes to add detailed provisions with respect to medical malpractice legislation to the substitute which is currently before the Senate, primarily on the subject of product liability.

All amendments, except for leadership amendments, that deal with medical malpractice under the order are to be offered today and debated throughout the day. There will also be approximately 1 hour for debate on all of those amendments tomorrow before 11 o'clock in the morning, when there will be votes on everything leading up to and including the McConnell amendment, after which time, with certain narrow exceptions, medical malpractice will no longer be discussed as a part of this bill.

So I want to express the hope that Members who wish to speak on the subject of medical malpractice or to offer additional amendments to the McConnell amendment will come to the floor and debate those issues today. Nothing in the order prohibits speeches or discussions on the legislation broader than medical malpractice, but this is

primarily going to be a medical malpractice day.

So we are open and ready for business for any Member who wishes to discuss that issue or to offer an amendment relating to that issue.

With that, for the time being, Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GREGG. 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. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to proceed as in morning business for approximately a half hour.

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

OUR NATION'S BUDGET

Mr. GREGG. Thank you, Mr. President.

I want to take this opportunity today to talk a little bit about what is going to happen relative to the budget of this country as we move forward through the next couple of months when we are taking up key issues involving the budget, and to talk a little bit about Medicare, which is obviously an issue of considerable concern for our senior citizens and of equal concern for those of us who served in the Senate and in the House of Representatives as we move through the process of trying to restructure, first, the budget of the country to put us into solvency and, second, to make sure that the Medicare system remains solvent, and that our seniors will be able to benefit from this, the largest insurance program in the Nation.

As I think everybody knows, this country faces some fairly significant crises in the coming years over the issue of the deficit. In fact, if we continue on our present course, it is projected that by about 2015, or thereabouts, this Nation will essentially end up in bankruptcy. It will be a bankruptcy which had been generated primarily by the fact that we, as a Government, have failed to address the spending side of the ledger of the Federal budget. It will also be a bankruptcy which passes on to our children a Nation where their chances for opportunity, their chances for a lifestyle which is prosperous, is essentially eliminated.

Unfortunately, if we do not take action soon, we will end up like Mexico is today; we will be a Nation unable to pay its bills. This is not fair or right, as I have said on a number of occasions on this floor. In fact, the way I have characterized it is—and I have talked about the postwar baby boom generation, the Bill Clinton generation—we will be the first generation in the history of this great and wonderful coun-

try to pass less on to our children than was given to us by our parents. Such an action cannot occur and should not occur. It is not right and it is not fair.

We need to address the issue of the deficit. In order to do this, it is, I think, informative to look at some of the proposals that are on the table and which have been evaluated by various agencies which review the deficit.

Each year, the Congressional Budget Office subjects the President's budget to its own independent analysis. It then publishes the analysis in a little book, the latest version of which was released last week. It is this blue book here. This is a very significant document because, as you will recall, when the President was elected, during his first speech to the Congress he stated he would use CBO as the fair and honest arbiter of the numbers of his budget.

This year, CBO has found some highly significant differences between what the President said will happen under his budget and what CBO believes will actually occur.

If you will recall, in February, when the President's budget was shown—when it was first delivered—it showed basically a steady state of deficits of \$200 billion each year for as far as the eye can see; \$200 billion a year, basically until the end of the budget cycle and beyond, with no progress toward a balanced budget, but at least no deterioration from the present position, which was pretty bad. It would have added, for example, a trillion dollars of new debt to the Federal deficit over the next 5 years.

CBO, however, says that this is not true; the President's budget is not accurate. CBO's analysis found that the President's budget proposal would actually cause the deficit to climb by \$100 billion over the next 5 years. From \$177 billion in the year 1996 to \$276 billion in the year 2000.

This chart here shows this problem. This is the President's budget as he proposed it. This would be balanced down here. There would be \$200 billion deficits for as far as the eye could see. But CBO has taken a look at the President's budget and found that not only is he giving us a \$200 billion deficit for as far as the eye could see, it appears that it is now on an upward trend and well above \$200 billion. In other words, the President's budget will actually result in adding \$1.2 trillion of new debt to the national debt over the next 5 years.

That is on top of the \$4.8 trillion which we already owe as a country, and it is debt which our children will have to pay. It is debt which is going to finance current expenses which we are undertaking.

The President's budget, it seems, was subject to some unfair criticism back in February, in fact. Republicans—and I must include myself among them—and some Democrats criticized it as a do-nothing budget. Well, now it ap-

pears that it is not a do-nothing budget, it is a make-things-worse budget.

Congress also received some additional information which is fairly significant in the last couple of weeks. It received a report from the trustees of the Social Security and Medicare trust fund. That is this report here. This is important because the trustees of the Medicare trust fund are independent individuals who are given the obligation of managing the Social Security and the trust fund program and who are theoretically, outside the political process, although three of them are political appointees.

For those who do not know that, the trustees include, for example, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Labor and Human Resources, the Commissioner of Social Security, the Administrator of Health Care Financing Administration. In addition, there are two public trustees. These two are not administration officials, but private citizens, who were appointed to their positions.

The alarming nature of this year's report results from the trustees' telling that the Medicare system is in a full-blown crisis, that it will go bankrupt in just 7 years if we do not take decisive action to fix it.

Let me show another chart which reflects the seriousness of this situation. This is the hospital trust fund, Medicare. As we see under the present scenario, it is solvent. Beginning in about the year 1997, it starts to have a negative cash flow, and by the year 2002, 2003, or 2004 it goes into deficit. In other words, it becomes bankrupt.

This is the most important trust fund after Social Security that we deal with as a nation. The Medicare trustees are saying that the trust fund will confront a negative cash flow in just 2 years. This means that the Medicare program will be spending more than the Medicare payroll tax brings in.

The Medicare will go insolvent in 7 years, or the year 2002. That is, the trust fund will not only have a negative cash flow, but that it will also have spent all the surplus reserves that it has accumulated. In other words, it will be bankrupt.

"It is important to remember," the trustees said, "that under present law there is no authority to pay insurance benefits if the assets of the hospital trust fund are depleted." That means at this point, when we cross this line, there will be no money to pay for health care for senior citizens. Medicare benefits would simply be cut off, or seniors would have to fend for themselves for their health care. While Congress would probably do something about that, right now the state of the law is that in the year 2002 senior citizens will have no health care insurance.

How big is the Medicare financial problem? The trustees report says the following:

Short term, to restore actuarial balance over the next 25 years, an immediate payroll