

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

Mrs. MURRAY. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, again, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

MINNESOTA TAX FREEDOM DAY

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, yesterday, on May 14, 1995, Minnesotans marked two annual occasions: one that millions of families look forward to each year, and one that millions of Minnesota taxpayers await with a mixture of anger and frustration.

First and foremost, of course, was Mother's Day, the day we all honor our mothers for the love and support they have given us.

The second, less well-known but equally significant event was Minnesota Tax Freedom Day, the day Minnesotans quit working to pay taxes at the Federal, State, and local levels of government and begin working for themselves. Every dollar my constituents have earned so far this year has gone to pay taxes. For a total of 134 days, Minnesotans have been working for the government; 85 of these days were spent paying off Federal taxes, while the remaining 49 days were spent paying off State and local taxes.

Tax Freedom Day comes much later in the year to Minnesota than it does to the Nation at large, which means Minnesotans spend longer than most Americans working to pay off their tax bills.

For the average American taxpayer, Tax Freedom Day is on May 6, but Minnesotans must work more than a week longer for Uncle Sam and his cousins at the State and local levels.

My constituents are encumbered with the sixth highest tax rate in the country. The only States whose Tax Freedom Days come after Minnesota's are Connecticut and New York, who both mark Tax Freedom Day on May 24; Washington, DC, and New Jersey, on May 18; and Hawaii, on May 17.

For 2 years, the tax load borne by Minnesotans has remained constant, and Tax Freedom Day has fallen on the same day, May 14. But sadly, a lot has changed since President Clinton's 1993 budget package.

In 1993, Tax Freedom Day in Minnesota was May 9. In effect, the tax increases imposed in President Clinton's 1993 budget have forced Minnesotans to work an additional 5 days just to pay off those new taxes.

These 5 days could have been spent on a family vacation, but there is no

time for fun when you are working to pay off the Government's spending splurges.

The average per capita income of Minnesota is \$24,403, 36.6 percent of which goes to pay taxes.

Translated into dollar terms, the average annual tax bill for every Minnesota taxpayer this year will be \$8,926, or over one-third of their hard-earned income.

Americans face a veritable cornucopia of tax burdens in their day-to-day lives, overflowing with the income taxes and payroll taxes which represent the largest component of the average American's tax bill.

In addition to these more visible taxes, the cost of nearly all goods and services are inflated by sales and excise taxes. There are property taxes, estate and other business taxes, and let us not forget the corporate income taxes which are passed along to consumers and employees in the form of higher prices and lower wages.

The perverse thing about our current progressive income tax system is that as national income increases, the tax burden increases along with it, more than proportionally. As a result, economic contractions tend to reduce American's tax burden while economic expansions tend to increase it.

It makes no sense that taxpayers should be penalized for robust economic growth by extracting more money from their paychecks.

This is why I support tax cuts—real tax cuts—that help American families keep more of what they earn. The \$500 per child tax credit goes a long way toward that end. Middle-class families could save more, or they could spend more—they would be given the freedom to do whatever they want with their money because it belongs to them.

We may never see Tax Freedom Day coincide with New Year's Day or even Valentine's Day, but let us face it: We are about to begin debate on a new budget resolution, one that can counteract the onerous effects of Clinton's package of tax hikes 2 years ago. Let us not miss this opportunity to offer tax relief to America's families. Let us ensure that Tax Freedom Day comes a lot earlier next year than it did last year.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT AGREEMENT—S. 395

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 12 o'clock noon the Senate turn to the consideration of calendar 101, S. 395 re-

garding the Alaska Power Administration.

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

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I thank the Chair. 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. PRESSLER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

The Senator from South Dakota is recognized.

THE BUDGET

Mr. PRESSLER. Mr. President, there has been much discussion about the budget of the United States that will be brought to this floor by Senator DOMENICI and the Budget Committee soon. I believe strongly we must do something in this country or Medicare will go broke and our country will go broke. That is the alternative on one side. The alternative on the other side is to do something about it.

Those are two rather grim alternatives. Because if we continue down the road with a \$4.8 trillion debt in a \$6.9 trillion economy, our money will soon become worthless. We are already seeing signs of this: the decline in the value of the dollar, particularly the unexplained collapse of the dollar against the yen and against the German mark. So something is wrong in our economy. In fact, I predict that at some point in the next 5 or 10 years we will have a cataclysmic event, economically speaking, in our country if we do not do something now about the Federal deficit.

We also have learned that Medicare will go broke by the year 2002 unless something is done. I have been a champion of senior citizens. I would ask our senior citizens, would we rather have a Medicare system that is broke, or would we rather have one that is solvent even though we may have to make certain changes? So that is where we stand as a country, basically, with this budget coming to the floor. It is a historic turning point in our country's history. We have to make a decision as to whether or not we are going to face up to the facts.

We had a debate on this Senate floor about the balanced budget amendment recently. The Democrats pointed out that our side of the aisle had no plan. They said, what is your plan to balance the budget? We do have a plan. It is the Domenici plan that will come to this floor. It has a lot of cuts; some cuts I do not personally agree with, but I am going to support the Domenici budget plan, generally speaking, because in part it is the only game in town.

The Democrats do not have a plan. Yet, they are criticizing our plan. That is unfortunate. The Democrats have

the White House. They are supposed to provide leadership in this area also. But they do not want to. So it is our burden in the Republican majority to provide commonsense leadership, to take the hits, to make the tough votes.

Mr. President, one of the newspapers in South Dakota this morning reported that the Federal Government—the Treasury—released how much my State would suffer if some of the budget cuts were made. I say to my fellow South Dakotans, that is the oldest trick in the book by the Federal bureaucracy. They release how much people are going to suffer, and how much money is going to be lost. They do not say that they might have to reduce the number of bureaucrats in Washington or at the Denver regional headquarters. They do not say that they are counting as part of the budget impact the elimination of bureaucrats and regulators whose work may involve South Dakota, but actually live in Washington, DC, or Denver. They merely say, “Your State is going to be hurt this much,” and, “Senator, if you vote to cut us, you are hurting your State.” Those numbers that are released in such a timely fashion show how skillful the Federal bureaucracy is at trying to protect themselves by politically hurting Senators and Congressmen who vote for cuts in the budget.

So I urge all South Dakotans, and all Americans, to take a close look at exactly what they are talking about.

In conclusion, Mr. President, on the budget, we face a very painful choice. On the one hand, we can go broke as a nation and see the value of the dollar decline and leave a great debt for future generations. We also can keep spending in Medicare at the same level without making changes and have it go broke by the year 2002.

On the other hand, we can take a responsible course. We can follow the outline of PETE DOMENICI's budget, which he is bringing to this floor.

The Republicans in the Senate have a plan. The Democrats do not. They are criticizing our plan. That is fine. We will take the criticism. But I want to say to the people in my State and to this country that I hope they give us the understanding and the credit for taking leadership, for taking the tough votes we will soon take, because the other side is merely throwing rocks at us as we are trying to climb up the hill.

Let us remember that our country is at a historic point. We could choose to go bankrupt, with a \$4 trillion debt this year. With many programs such as Medicare going broke, we can keep doing what we are doing, and if so, it is going to lead to a cataclysmic event. Or we can take some tough medicine, and take some tough votes.

In the next 6 months, I believe that I will be casting the toughest votes of my Senate career. I ask for the understanding of my constituents because it is not easy. I would rather be voting to give everybody everything. It must have been fun to be a Senator in the

1960's, when you could vote for amendments without having any budget offset. Now, with every amendment we have, if we add something to the budget, we have to say where we are taking it from. We have to state under the budget rules what this is going to do to the Federal budget.

So the whole tone of the next 6 months in this Chamber is going to be a very difficult one. We are going to see Senators struggle in their votes. It is going to be easier to demagog and to say let us wait until next year, or delay it 3 or 5 years. But the time has come to stand up and be counted. I believe that we can do a great deal for the future of the United States if we do so.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. BRYAN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. BRYAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for a period not to exceed 10 minutes as if in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BRYAN. Mr. President, I thank the Chair.

PRAIRIE ISLAND DRY CASK

Mr. BRYAN. Mr. President, I would like to bring to the attention of my colleagues a little noticed, but I think significant, event that occurred last week.

Last Thursday, Northern States Power transferred spent nuclear fuel from its reactor pool at Prairie Island into a new dry storage cask located at the reactor site.

Prairie Island, near Red Wing, MN, is the location of two of Northern States Power's three nuclear power reactors.

Licensed to operate starting in 1973 and 1974 respectively, Prairie Island 1 and Prairie Island 2 share a spent fuel storage pool.

Today, 20 years into the 40-year licensed life of the reactors, the pool is filling up.

Northern States Power needed to find more storage for the waste generated at Prairie Island. Fortunately, licensed technology, dry cask storage, was available which would allow the utility to move the oldest spent fuel assemblies out of the pool.

NSP proposed to locate the casks at the reactor site.

Thursday's announcement of final NRC approval to load the casks is the final chapter in a prolonged political and public relations effort by NSP to resolve until the year 2002 its Prairie Island waste problem.

The public outcry that erupted after NSP proposed to expand on-site storage is every utility executive's nightmare, and led to the perception of the Prairie Island situation as the poster child of

the nuclear power industry's current propaganda campaign for interim storage of high-level nuclear waste in Nevada.

In spite of the obvious solution available to NSP, on-site dry casks, the Prairie Island situation has, for several years now, been held up as the prime example of why Congress must immediately reopen the Nuclear Waste Policy Act to speed up progress on moving high-level nuclear waste to Nevada.

Twenty percent of the Nation's electricity power supply, we have been told, is at risk if Congress does not act soon.

Reactors will shut down, cities will go dark, and electricity rates will skyrocket, if Congress does not take the waste off the hands of the utilities soon—according to the nuclear power industry. The nuclear power industry's shameless campaign to get the Federal Government to take responsibility for its waste is not new.

In 1980, at the same time Congress was considering options for the permanent disposal of high-level waste, the nuclear power industry was pushing for away-from-reactor storage, or AFR.

Without a Federal AFR facility, according to the industry, reactors would begin closing by 1983.

Of course, no Federal AFR was built, and no reactors closed for lack of storage.

Besides creating the misleading impression of a crisis, of impending doom, the nuclear power propaganda campaign has always sought to create the impression that there is only one solution, one option for avoiding the supposedly catastrophic consequences of reactor shutdowns: move the high-level nuclear waste to Nevada. That is the only proposal that is offered.

First, we as a State were targeted for a permanent repository.

That program is an acknowledged failure.

Now we are targeted for interim storage.

For the nuclear power industry, that means 100 years, subject to renewal. That amounts to de facto permanent storage.

According to the nuclear power industry, interim storage in Nevada is the only salvation for the future of nuclear power.

Nevadans have made it crystal clear that we want no part of the nuclear power industry's solution to its waste problem. Nuclear waste is not welcome in Nevada.

Nevertheless, the nuclear power industry, and its surrogate for this matter, the Department of Energy, has been relentless in its efforts to force Nevadans to bear the health and safety risks of solving a problem we had no role in creating.

Mr. President, there are solutions to the nuclear waste storage problem that do not include Nevada. Last weeks events at Prairie Island make that abundantly clear.