

and a balanced plan. I am pleased it received bipartisan support. And 46 Members of this body, 46 out of the 100 Senators, voted for that plan: 22 Republicans, 24 Democrats.

Mr. President, I am delighted that it appears that we can once again next year convene our centrist coalition with the able leadership of Senator BREAUX on the Democratic side, while I will be pleased to rally the Republican Members. I am convinced we can once again come forward with constructive solutions to the Medicare challenges.

Mr. President, in closing I would stress this. Members of this body are now scattering to 50 different States. All of them are going to be involved in the campaigns either as candidates themselves, or as helping those from their parties in their own States.

It is my earnest hope, Mr. President, that the Senators seeking reelection and, indeed, all Senators will not lock themselves into such positions that would prevent them from taking the necessary votes that are going to be required if we are going to reform the Medicare Program next year.

If we do not reform this program, if no one wants to touch it because it is too much of a hot potato, if it is regarded as the third rail which nobody can touch, leave it alone, then absolute disaster will face Medicare—the Medicare Program in the future.

So I again urge all my colleagues, those seeking reelection, those who are not even Senators yet but are challengers, not to get themselves into such a position that they are prevented from taking the tough votes that are required to reform the Medicare Program so that it will be there for future beneficiaries.

Mr. President, I see that no one else is desiring to speak at this time and, therefore, 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. BREAUX. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FAIRCLOTH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BREAUX. I ask unanimous consent to that I be recognized for 10 minutes as in morning business.

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

BIPARTISAN LEGISLATING

Mr. BREAUX. Mr. President, I take the floor to first commend one of our previous speakers this afternoon, the Senator from Rhode Island, the distinguished JOHN CHAFEE, who worked as one of our leaders in a truly bipartisan fashion in the last Congress in our mainstream coalition, the so-called Chafee-Breaux coalition. We had an equal number of Democrats and Republicans who really worked very hard to-

gether to try to address some of the problems facing this country with the inability of the Congress to really come together in any kind of a bipartisan fashion.

I have been in this business a relatively long number of years, and I think it becomes increasingly evident to me, and I think to many others, what the American people want us to do is to resolve our differences in a manner that makes sense, that is fair to the average American, and that gets the job done. More and more, people back home in my State of Louisiana want Congress to just make Government work. They elect us to do that. Yet they see so many times we seem to be engaged more in partisan battles that end up in stalemates and Government shutdowns, and people back home wonder whether what we do up here makes any sense at all.

One of the bright spots in this Congress was the opportunity that I had to work with many of my colleagues on this side of the aisle as well as on the Republican side of the aisle in that mainstream coalition, the so-called Chafee-Breaux organization. I think we really made some progress. We came very close to actually adopting a budget. We got 46 votes in the Senate on a package that was a real effort in Medicare reform, Medicaid reform, and it had a tax cut in it. It had an adjustment to the Consumer Price Index, which most economists agree is incorrect and does not properly state the amount of inflation for the entitlement program adjustment.

So we really, I think, went a long way toward getting a job done. We brought that package to the floor. It had welfare reform in it. It was debated. We had a surprisingly large number of votes from both sides of the aisle that said, yes, it is about time we move in this direction.

I was very proud of that effort, and I commend the Senator from Rhode Island and everybody who worked in that effort. Unfortunately, many of the Members who worked with us are not going to be back in the next Congress because they have decided to voluntarily retire from Senate service, and they are going to be missed. Each and every one of them was a major contributor to this effort. While their physical presence may be missed, I think the work they have helped us begin will still be with us in the next Congress. Their advice and assistance and recommendations, I hope, will still be forthcoming because they were very valuable members of our group this year and can be of very valuable assistance in a positive fashion in the next Congress.

So, having said that, I wish to also point out that there will be another day to bring this effort to the floor in the next Congress. We certainly intend to continue our organization, to continue our group, to see if we cannot bridge that gap between the two different aisles to form coalitions from

the center out. I am absolutely convinced that the only way we solve difficult problems in any kind of a parliamentary body is by working from the center out in order to form a majority coalition. I am absolutely convinced that you can never start from the far left and hope to get a majority, nor can you start from the far right and ever hope to put together a majority on just about anything. But if you start from the middle and work out and gradually pick up more and more people, one day you find you have a majority, which is what a democracy demands from all of us. The people demand we make Government work. Hopefully, in the next Congress, we will be able to continue that effort and be even more successful than we were in this endeavor in this Congress.

My colleague from Rhode Island talked a little bit about Medicare. That is one of the real challenges we are going to face in the next Congress. Medicare is so easy to politicize, and both sides have contributed to that effort. We have scared people about the collapse of the Medicare system. We have scared people about not adequately funding it. People must be very confused.

I remember the story quite well when we were doing the debate on health care reform and we had the Clinton plan and there was a lot of discussion about it being too large, too much too soon, and all of those things.

I remember coming back home to New Orleans and having a lady come up to me in the airport and say, "You are all working on that health care reform back in Washington?" I said, "Yes, ma'am, we are." She said, "Whatever you do, don't let the Federal Government take over my Medicare." I said, "OK. We won't let that happen."

Medicare is a Federal program. It was passed under the administration of 1965. It is run by the people in Washington. It is totally a Federal program. She loved it, but she sure did not want the Federal Government having anything to do with it, although the Federal Government had everything to do with it. So people are very concerned about this issue, and I think that we have to be careful and try to not politicize it as we are all guilty of doing too often.

The facts are very scary. These are the facts. They are not Democratic facts or Republican facts. These are just facts about what is going to happen to Medicare from which so many seniors and their children benefit directly because mom and dad and grandfather and grandmother are taken care of.

We have a heck of a problem facing us. The hospital insurance fund, the so-called part A of Medicare that pays for the hospital insurance, which is financed by a 2.9-percent payroll tax, which is awfully high, equally divided between workers and their employers—part B, of course, covers doctor bills—the latest figures we have show that

under part A, hospital insurance, how much we spend is exceeding how much we take in to such an extent that the trust fund, which now has a surplus of \$121 billion, will be almost completely depleted by the year 2000.

That is not that far from now—completely depleted. The trust fund of \$121 billion is gone in the year 2000, and it will run a deficit, which means we will not have enough money to pay the bills of up to \$53 billion the next year, the year 2001, unless we make some changes.

CBO has projected the net Medicare outlays under the current law will increase at an average rate of 9.3 percent between this year and the year 2002. So we are going to be spending more money, and yet we are rapidly depleting the fund from which that money comes.

Our bill last year was one of three main proposals. The President's proposal called for savings of \$116 billion; the Breaux-Chafee, Chafee-Breaux proposal had a savings of \$154 billion over 7 years, and the Republican budget plan called for savings of \$270 billion.

There is one thing that is certain and nobody should disagree: We are going to have to do something, and it is not going to be easy. It is going to be painful. We can make it less political and less painful if we try to bring together organizations and come from the center aisle out to come up with something that works.

Let us face it. It is a very inefficient system. The lady in New Orleans loved it, but she was not talking about how inefficient it is. It is inefficient because it is an old-style program. It is called fee-for-service. You send the bill; we pay the bill. No matter what the bill is, we pay it basically. Every other type of medical delivery system in this country is using innovative new programs—HMO's, preferred provider organizations, POS's, other types of innovative ways of delivering health care that has brought together a great deal of competition.

No. 1, we have to expand the options for Medicare beneficiaries, give them more choices, let the choices be more competitive and all aimed at providing quality service while at the same time doing it at a better price. So, we have to encourage the growth of managed care and have more alternatives for individuals than we have had in the past. Those are some of the things that we need to be looking at.

There are a whole bunch of options we put forth in our proposal, the Chafee-Breaux bill. We are going to be revisiting that in the next Congress. Today, obviously, is not the day or time to outline a comprehensive list on what we need to do with Medicare. Suffice it to say that both sides together, Democrats and Republicans, have to realize that this has to be one of our priorities in the early part of the next Congress.

I would, frankly, like to see the new President-elect—I hope that it is the

President of my party, the incumbent President, but should the former Majority Leader Dole be elected, so be it—but whoever it is, I suggest very strongly that immediately following the election they immediately consider appointing a commission to take a look at this and have a recommendation ready for us when we get back in January. Why waste November, December, and January just talking about this issue? I suggest whoever wins on November 5, one of the first things they do is call for a bipartisan commission to begin work to present them with a recommendation when the new Congress begins so we can start from day one trying to forge a compromise that gets the job done in a number of entitlement areas, particularly in Medicare. We certainly have our work cut out for us.

With that, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, thank you, very much.

THE PARKS BILL

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, we sit here and watch the clock move forward as we close this Senate. I have been involved in the last several days in trying to get the parks bill before we leave. Forty-one States have park projects in this bill. It is extremely important to so many. We have been literally working round the clock to try to come to some agreement. Senator BRADLEY, myself, Senator MURKOWSKI, Leon Panetta, and his staff have been virtually working on this full time for the last several days. We do not yet have an agreement. We are close to an agreement.

But there is a very important concept in the letter from the administration to Senator MURKOWSKI that deals with ensuring that all applicable laws would pertain to the Tongass. This is a sticking point at this moment.

Mr. President, I just come here to express my public wish that we can come together on this matter because it seems to me that it would be tragic if we couldn't come together when we are so close and we lose over 100 parks because one Senator felt that the wording didn't accurately reflect his view. I really feel that when we negotiate with one another—and it is very difficult to do it—that we know that underlying everything the laws of the United States of America will apply to whatever we do. So whether it was stated, or whether it was stated in writing or not, it should not, it seems to me, be a breaking point.

It has been a very long negotiation. I still have hope, although I have to say

I think it is a 50-50 situation at this point. I hope that we can close this U.S. Senate out with a fitting tribute to the people we all serve, and pass this parks bill.

I just hope that we can come together. None of us gets everything we want in life. Certainly there are many things which I have been working for that are not reflected in this bill, and I will come back another day to fight those battles.

But when the House of Representatives gets to pass a bill with only 40 dissenting votes—I hope the majority leader and the minority leader agree—it seems to me that this U.S. Senate should be able to do the same thing.

We should try to help each other gain the respect we all deserve for our points of view but at the end of the day—and at the end of this day and at the end of this session—we ought to bring home a parks bill.

Mr. President, for me it has been a very exciting Congress in many ways, and toward the end, it was able to pick up some steam, and we were able to be more bipartisan. I only hope that in the next hour or so we will come together, and that we will get a parks bill that gives us all comfort. I say "gives us all comfort" because it is a good bill. It is a bipartisan bill, and it is what we were sent here to do.

Thank you, very much, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

SENATOR SAM NUNN

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I see that the Senator from Georgia has come to the floor. This is an opportunity for me.

I put a statement in the RECORD as a tribute to all of the Senators on both sides of the aisle who are leaving.

But I want to tell the Senator from Georgia how much I am going to miss his advice and counsel on issues that deal with security, and how much I respect his quiet dignity, his quiet leadership, and how much I wish him well and his family. I know, as Senator BRADLEY said yesterday, as he quoted a very famous poem, that he has miles to go before he sleeps. For Senator BRADLEY, Senator NUNN, and all of the other Senators who are leaving us—and as I said to Senator BRADLEY—I hope you will not need to take time out for a nap, let alone sleep, because we need the leadership that these great Senators have provided us on both sides of the aisle.

Mr. NUNN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GRAMS). The distinguished and honorable Senator from Georgia is recognized.

Mr. NUNN. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, I want to say first to the Senator from California that I thank her for her kind remarks. I have thoroughly enjoyed serving with the Senator from California, as well as the personal friendship that we developed,