

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,

particularly since she has been in the Senate, but even before in conference committees that we had between the House and the Senate.

I enjoyed our affiliation, and I will be looking forward to the future years of excellent leadership by the Senator from California as I view this great body on C-SPAN, and as I watch the activities and follow the daily events.

THE PARKS BILL

Mr. NUNN. Mr. President, I might also add that I completely support the expressed desire and wish of the Senator from California that we pass a parks bill.

Interestingly enough, one of my campaign commitments is yet uncompleted since 1972. It is sort of hard to admit that it is still outstanding after 24 years. In that bill is the Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Park. That is the site of the famous Civil War battle where the road has to be taken out of the park because traffic is basically interfering with the park. This bill has the authorization requiring the completion of that project.

It is my hope that the Senate, before it adjourns, will help me carry out that very important campaign commitment that has been pending now for 24 years.

So I share the Senator's sentiments and thank her for her kind remarks.

A SPECIAL WORD OF APPRECIATION TO THE STAFF

Mr. NUNN. Mr. President, as the 104th Congress and my own Senate career draw to a close today, I want to say a special word of appreciation to our terrific floor staff and our support staff for all of their help to the Members and staff of the Armed Services Committee and to me personally during the past 2 years, and, indeed, during my entire Senate career.

I chaired the Armed Services Committee for 8 years and was ranking Democrat on that committee for 2 years before I became the chairman. During the last 2 years, I have been the ranking Democrat on the committee under Senator THURMOND's leadership.

So for 12 years of my Senate career, I have worked constantly with the floor staff. I observed them before that time. In these last 12 years, I have developed a very acute understanding and appreciation for their splendid service.

A great deal of work in the Senate takes place in the Senate committees. We know that. But the culmination of the completion of legislative process occurs right here on the Senate floor; always has, and always will.

Our guests in the gallery and the people who watch television around the country understand—because they watch and hear the procedures—that the legislative procedure on the Senate floor is complicated. It always has been. Maybe we can make it simpler. It always will be complicated because parliamentary rules in a democracy are complicated.

The sequencing of legislation, the filing and adopting of amendments, advising the Presiding Officer and individual Senators of parliamentary procedures, the taking down of every word that is spoken on the Senate floor—as our reporters do so well every day, even in the heat of debate—are all essential ingredients of the legislative process on the Senate floor. This process could not take place without the dedicated work of extraordinarily capable and talented staff members.

Our Democratic floor staff works under the direction of Marty Paone, the Secretary to the Minority. Marty stepped into some pretty big shoes when he took over from his predecessor and long-time valuable Senate staff member, Abby Saffold, but those shoes fit Marty very well today. Marty's thorough knowledge of the details of the legislative process have made him indispensable to the U.S. Senate. Marty has always been available to me and to my staff to provide counsel and assistance whenever we needed that assistance. I especially appreciate Marty's support in ensuring prompt consideration of the thousands of nominations that the Armed Services Committee reports every year.

On the staff of the Democratic leader Senator DASCHLE, John Hilley, who left last year to become the Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs; Peter Rouse, Senator DASCHLE's Chief of Staff; Larry Stein and Randy DeValk have worked very effectively with the Armed Services Committee Members and staff on national security issues and legislation.

Mr. President, I cannot say enough about the excellent day-to-day support we have had from Democratic floor staff of Brad Austin, Gary Myrick, Paul Brown, and Kelly Riordan who recently left the Senate staff. These individuals work under the leadership of our highly capable chief Democratic floor assistant, Lula Davis. I believe Lula is in the Chamber now. Lula is not only terrific in her leadership role; she always has time for a friendly word or often a humorous remark to put our heavy burdens in the proper perspective. Lula is even thoughtful enough to point out when the senior Senator from Georgia is wearing a tie that is "off color and out of style". Unfortunately, that sometimes occurs every day of the week. I am grateful for that kind of candid and frank advice from Lula in her leadership role. That probably is a little out of the scope of duty, but nevertheless it is appreciated.

Managing and passing defense authorization bills and other legislation in the Senate becomes more challenging every year. Lula, Brad, Gary, and Paul are terrific individuals, are great staff, and have always been indispensable in assisting us move our committee bills through the Senate.

I also want to thank our excellent Democratic cloakroom staff of Leonard Oursler, Christine Krasow, Paul Cloutier, and Brian Griffin. They must

get asked about 1,000 times a week "When is the next vote? When are we going to get out? What time do we adjourn?" Of course, they do not always know, but they always give you a good answer and their best assessment. They never fail to cheerfully respond to that or any other question even though it may have been answered by them 100 to 1,000 times a day. Their selfless and dedicated service has made all of our jobs easier. Certainly, it has made mine easier during the entire time I have been in the Senate.

I should also note that while not working with them on a day-to-day basis as we do with our own floor staff, the Republican floor staff under the Secretary of the Majority Liz Greene has always worked with us to resolve any problems or issues associated with our committee's work. I must also note that Howard Greene was very helpful to me on many occasions and to the committee when he served as the Secretary of the Majority.

Legislative Clerk Scott Bates and his assistant David Tinsley; Bill Clerk Kathie Alvarez and her assistants Mary Anne Clarkson and Danielle Fling; and Enrolling Clerk Tom Lundregan and his assistant Charlene McDevitt are an indispensable part of the legislative process on the Senate floor.

Mr. President, I frankly do not know how they do it sometimes, but they are able to keep track of all the amendments on major bills and produce a complete Senate bill in a very short time.

Executive Clerk David Marcos and his assistant Michelle Haynes keep track of thousands of nominations that the Armed Services Committee and other committees of the Senate act on each year. We are deeply indebted to these capable people.

I also want to express my appreciation to the Senate Parliamentarian Bob Dove, and members of his office: Alan Frumin, Kevin Kayes, and Sally Goffinet, as well as their predecessors since I served in the Senate. When I came to the Senate, Dr. Floyd Riddick was the Parliamentarian, and he was succeeded by Murray Zweben, both of whom were excellent and took many, many hours of time to help junior Senators, like the Senator from Georgia, when we first arrived in the Senate. We were so desirous and in need of parliamentary advice. All of the Parliamentarian staff have consistently provided objective and timely answers to the many questions I have had over the years. I think that is true of other Senators and certainly true of our staffs as they have sought advice day in and day out.

Finally, Mr. President, I thank all of the official reporters of debate that takes place in the Chamber under the direction of Chief Reporter Ron Kavulick and all of the staff members who have the awesome responsibility of producing the verbatim transcript of the Senate's proceedings. Journal Clerks Bill Lackey, Mark Lacovara,