

tighter and tighter and tighter, until the President will finally realize that it is in his interest, as well as the country's interest, to agree to a budget.

So I urge my colleagues to vote for this amendment.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WELLSTONE. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, in a moment, I am going to send an amendment to the desk. This is a sense-of-the-Senate amendment. I will read this:

To urge the President to release already-appropriated fiscal year 1996 emergency funding for home heating and other energy assistance, and to express the sense of the Senate on advanced-appropriated funding for fiscal year 1997.

I am working with colleagues on both sides of the aisle, and later on I think we will be able to work out an agreement, and I can summarize it at that point. My understanding is that we need to get amendments in.

I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside.

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

AMENDMENT NO. 3520 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3466

(Purpose: To urge the President to release already-appropriated fiscal year 1996 emergency funding for home heating and other energy assistance, and to express the sense of the Senate on advance-appropriated funding for FY 1997)

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Minnesota [Mr. WELLSTONE], for himself, Mr. JEFFORDS, Mr. KOHL, Mr. KERRY, Mr. LEAHY, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. SANTORUM, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. GLENN, and Mr. PELL, proposes an amendment numbered 3520 to amendment No. 3466.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

The Senate finds that:

Record low temperatures across the country this winter, coupled with record snowfalls in many areas, have generated substantial and sustained demand among eligible low-income Americans for home heating assistance, and put many who face heating-related crises at risk;

Home heating assistance for working and low-income families with children, the elderly on fixed incomes, the disabled, and others who need such help is a critical part of the social safety net in cold-weather areas;

The President has released approximately \$900 million in regular Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) fund-

ing for this year, compared to a funding level of \$1.319 billion last year, and a large LIHEAP funding shortfall remains which has adversely affected eligible recipients in many cold-weather states;

LIHEAP is a highly targeted, cost-effective way to help approximately 6 million low-income Americans to pay their energy bills. More than two-thirds of LIHEAP-eligible households have annual incomes of less than \$8000; more than one-half have annual income below \$6000.

LIHEAP program funding has been substantially reduced in recent years, and cannot sustain any further spending cuts if the program is to remain a viable means of meeting the home heating and other energy-related needs of low-income people in cold-weather states;

Traditionally, LIHEAP has received advance appropriations for the next fiscal year. This allows states to properly plan for the upcoming winter and best serve the energy needs of low income families.

Congress was not able to pass an appropriations bill for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education by the beginning of this fiscal year and it was only because LIHEAP received advance appropriations last fiscal year that the President was able to release the \$578 million he did in December—the bulk of the funds made available to the states this winter.

There is currently available to the President up to \$300 million in emergency LIHEAP funding, which could be made available immediately, on a targeted basis, to meet the urgent home heating needs of eligible persons who otherwise could be faced with heating-related emergencies, including shut-offs, in the coming weeks;

Therefore, it is the sense of the Senate that:

(a) the President should release immediately a substantial portion of available emergency funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program for FY 1996, to help meet continuing urgent needs for home heating assistance during this unusually cold winter; and

(b) not less than the \$1 billion in regular advance-appropriated LIHEAP funding for next winter provided for in this bill should be retained in a House-Senate conference on this measure.

Mr. SARBANES. Mr. President, I rise today to express my support for the amendment offered by the Senator from Minnesota, Senator WELLSTONE. This amendment reiterates the Senate's strong commitment to maintaining funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program [LIHEAP] despite efforts in the House of Representatives to terminate this program and urges House and Senate conferees to continue to fund LIHEAP at the Senate level of \$1 billion.

Congress first authorized the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program in 1981 at a time of unprecedented energy costs in order to help low-income households maintain an adequate level of heat in their homes to ensure their health and safety. This program helps an approximate 6.1 million households each year in the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. commonwealths and territories. For many of these households, which represent the most vulnerable segment of the population, including the elderly, the disabled, the working poor and children, the assistance they receive

through LIHEAP can mean the difference between having to choose between heating their home in the cold winter months or other vital needs such as food, warm clothing, and medical care.

Mr. President, a recent study by the National Consumer Law Center indicated that there is a widening gap between the level of LIHEAP funding and the total heating and cooling costs for low-income families. While the LIHEAP benefits provided to these needy families can not meet their entire energy costs, the average benefit of \$216 per household for heating assistance can prove critical to the efforts of senior citizens and working poor families on a fixed income to stay safely in their homes.

In my own State of Maryland, LIHEAP funds cover only about 20 percent of the cost of the average heating bill for eligible recipients. The Maryland Energy Assistance Program, which administers the LIHEAP program, draws on support from other public sector sources, non-profit agencies, private industry and public utilities in order to best meet the compelling energy needs of approximated 90,000 low-income Marylanders.

This collaboration between public and private sector entities has resulted in a number of innovative programs to make home energy more affordable to the most vulnerable group of Maryland citizens. Special payment arrangements with utilities, expanded public education and energy conservation programs, including weatherization assistance, and direct access to other energy-related programs, serve to make the LIHEAP program in Maryland a successful coordinated effort.

Mr. President, this winter has seen record snowfalls in the Mid-Atlantic region and bitterly cold temperatures across much of the country. This severe winter weather threatened the safety of millions of Americans and strained States' ability to help needy families at a time when the budgetary impasse made the very future of the LIHEAP program uncertain. This program is effective and over the years has helped many families in need with their energy bills. Support of Senator WELLSTONE's amendment will send a strong message to the House of Representatives that the Senate will persist in its efforts to maintain adequate funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

SYMPATHIES TO THE PEOPLE OF SCOTLAND

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, while I have the floor, I do not want to interrupt if there are other Senators with amendments. I want them to have an opportunity to offer them. If not, let me just take a moment to read a resolution that has been accepted on both sides extending sympathies to the people of Scotland:

Whereas, all Americans were horrified by the news this morning that 16 kindergarten children and their teacher were shot and killed yesterday in Dunblane, Scotland, by an individual who invaded their school;

Whereas, another 12 children and 3 adults were apparently wounded in the same terrible assault;

Whereas, this was an unspeakable tragedy of huge dimensions causing tremendous feeling of horror and anger and sadness affecting all people around the world;

And, whereas, the people of the United States wish to extend their sympathy to the people of Scotland in their hours of hurt, pain, and grief;

Therefore, be it resolved by the Senate of the United States that the Senate on behalf of the American people does extend its condolences and sympathies to the families of the little children and others who were murdered and wounded, and to all the people of Scotland with fervent hopes and prayers that such an occurrence will never ever again take place.

Mr. President, I wanted to read this on the floor. This has been accepted. This is the unanimous voice of the U.S. Senate.

I wish there was more that we could do. But I think it is important that we recognize what has happened and send our love and our support.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

BALANCED BUDGET DOWNPAYMENT ACT, II

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all pending amendments be set aside.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 3521 AND 3522 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3466

Mr. BOND. Mr. President I send to the desk two amendments for Senator McCRAIN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Missouri [Mr. BOND], for Mr. McCRAIN, proposes amendments numbered 3521 and 3522 en bloc to amendment No. 3466.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 3521

(Purpose: To require that disaster funds made available to certain agencies be allocated in accordance with the established prioritization processes of the agencies)

On page 756, between lines 10 and 11, insert the following:

SEC. 1103. ALLOCATION OF FUNDS.

Notwithstanding chapters 2, 4, and 6 of this title—

(1) funds made available under this title for economic development assistance programs of the Economic Development Administration shall be made available to the general fund of the Administration to be allocated in accordance with the established competitive prioritization process of the Administration;

(2) funds made available under this title for construction by the United States Fish and

Wildlife Service shall be allocated in accordance with the established prioritization process of the Service; and

(3) funds made available under this title for community development grants by the Department of Housing and Urban Development shall be allocated in accordance with the established prioritization process of the Department.

AMENDMENT NO. 3522

(Purpose: To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to develop a plan for the allocation of health care resources of the Department of Veterans Affairs)

SEC. . PLAN FOR ALLOCATION OF HEALTH CARE RESOURCES BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(A) PLAN.—(1) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall develop a plan for the allocation of health care resources (including personnel and funds) of the Department of Veterans Affairs among the health care facilities of the Department so as to ensure that veterans having similar economic status, eligibility priority and, or, similar medical conditions who are eligible for medical care in such facilities have similar access to such care in such facilities regardless of the region of the United States in which such veterans reside.

(2) The Plan shall reflect, to the maximum extent possible, the Veterans Integrated Service Network, as well as the Resource Planning and Management System developed by the Department of Veterans Affairs to account for forecasts in expected workload and to ensure fairness to facilities that provide cost-efficient health care, and shall include procedures to identify reasons for variations in operating costs among similar facilities and ways to improve the allocation of resources so as to promote efficient use of resources and provision of quality health care.

(3) The Secretary shall prepare the plan in consultation with the Under Secretary of Health of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(b) PLAN ELEMENTS.—The plan under subsection (a) shall set forth—

(1) milestones for achieving the goal referred to in that subsection; and

(2) a means of evaluating the success of the Secretary in meeting the goals through the plan.

(c) SUBMITTAL TO CONGRESS.—The Secretary shall submit to Congress the plan developed under subsection (a) not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(d) PLAN IMPLEMENTATION.—The Secretary shall implement the plan developed under subsection (a) within 60 days of submitting such plan to Congress under subsection (b), unless within such period the Secretary notifies the appropriate Committees of Congress that such plan will not be implemented along with an explanation of why such plan will not be implemented.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask that those amendments be set aside.

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

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BOND. 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. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendments be set aside.

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

AMENDMENT NO. 3501

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I would like to move to an amendment that has been cleared which I would like to call up on behalf of Senators COHEN and BUMPERS numbered 3501.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That amendment has already been filed.

Mr. BOND. That amendment has already been filed. I understand that it has been cleared on both sides. It is an amendment to permit recipients of Legal Services Corporation grants to use funds derived from non-Federal sources to testify at legislative hearings, or to respond to requests for certain information.

As I understand it, this amendment is acceptable to both sides. Therefore, it will not require a rollcall vote. I assume that we can move to a voice vote to adopt this amendment.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I rise to express my serious concerns with the Cohen-Bumpers amendment regarding the ability of Legal Services Corporation grantees to testify on legislation or rulemaking before Federal, State, or local government bodies. I will not block this amendment at this time, but I think this is a topic worthy of greater deliberation and one that should be revisited.

Earlier today, I offered an amendment, which was accepted on both sides, that was prompted by the oft-reported tendency of LSC grantees to exceed the bounds of the law, of its own rules, and of appropriate behavior in pursuing agendas that are often political or ideological, and not oriented toward providing legal services.

The Senate had a significant debate over LSC funding during our original consideration of the Commerce-State-Justice appropriation bill because of this very issue.

Even in rejecting the Appropriations Committee's recommendation to replace the current LSC system with block grants to the States, the Senate still voted, in adopting the Domenici amendment, to try to focus the activities of LSC grantees on their mission to provide legal representation to the needy in legal proceedings. That is the only LSC-grantee activity that the Federal Government has any business funding, directly or indirectly. Political and policymaking advocacy clearly are—and ought to be—considered inappropriate.

In this area and others, the Senate has come down firmly against Federal subsidies for lobbying and advocacy. Three times last year, the Senate adopted different Simpson-Craig amendments along these lines that related to Federal grants, in general. The one that became law, in the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, prevents any Federal grants, awards, or loans from going to IRS 501(c)(4) organizations that engage in lobbying activities.

The Senate has been building this record on indirect subsidies of lobbying