

others in the Chamber who do not support a balanced budget. I do not know who those others are, but somehow those who bring a proposal to the floor to increase the Federal budget deficit, even as they repeal the 4.3-cent gasoline tax, are accusing others of not supporting a balanced budget. It is an interesting paradox in political dialogue.

I thought it would be useful today, just for a couple of minutes, to talk about some of these proposals more generally. Those who bring the proposed cut in the gas tax to the floor of the Senate, I suspect, think it is very popular, and it may be popular for someone to bring a bill to the floor to say, "Let's repeal all taxes. Let's have no one any longer be a taxpayer. Let's get rid of all taxpayers." But, of course, we provide for the common defense. That costs some money. We build roads in this country. We provide for schools. We hire police and firefighters. We do all the things necessary to govern.

Then we have people come and say, "Today is tax freedom day; it is the day beyond which no one ever has to support government again," suggesting, somehow, that the taxes that have been paid earlier in the year to invest in Social Security, Medicare, a police department, a fire department, or a Defense Department or the Centers for Disease Control, somehow none of that mattered, and all of that was squandered and wasted.

I guess I do not understand some of the logic. But the same people will bring to the floor apparently next week a proposal for a \$40 to \$60 billion national defense plan, a new iteration of star wars. These same people who propose a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution that, by the way, would raid the Social Security trust fund, now say, "Let's embark on a new program called national missile defense." They say, "On the little issues, we insist that the Pentagon does not know what it ought to spend. We demand that the generals and admirals spend \$12 billion more than they ask for. We insist they buy planes they do not ask for, they buy trucks they do not need, they buy submarines they do not want. We insist they buy all of that because generals and admirals do not know how much they want to spend. We in Congress know better," and then insist they spend \$12 billion more than the Pentagon has asked for.

On top of that, we insist on a new, expensive, gold-plated star wars program now named "national missile defense." Oh, it is not star wars, they say. Oh, yes, it is. The bill suggests that we build space-based lasers. Of course it is star wars. Will it cost a lot of money? You bet your life it will cost a lot of money—\$40 to \$60 billion. The tragedy is this: There is relatively little likelihood of a rogue nation getting hold of an ICBM missile in order to put a nuclear tip on the top of it and threaten the United States. There is so little likelihood of that. There is so great a

likelihood of some terrorist nation, some rogue nation, some band of independent terrorists getting a nuclear device and putting it in the trunk of a rusty Yugo and parking it on a New York City dock, or a glass vial that big with the deadliest biological agents known to mankind to threaten a major metropolitan area, or, yes, even a rental truck with a fertilizer bomb.

We understand about terrorism and about the threat to this country. The threat is not a rogue nation having a sophisticated intercontinental ballistic missile. It is the threat of terrorists with deadly biological agents and suitcase bombs, including suitcase nuclear devices that will threaten this country. Yet, we are told a national missile defense star wars program is what this country needs.

My colleague this morning said the issue is paychecks, the issue is paychecks and jobs. I agree with that. There is no social program in this country that has the value of a good job that pays well. That is one of the reasons I would like to do a number of things. I would like to straighten out our trade mess in this country. Our trade deficit is unforgivable. We ought not have a \$30 billion trade deficit with China and then have them, when they need to buy airplanes, tell us, "You either make them in China or we will not buy them from you." We ought not have a recurring \$60 billion annual trade deficit, a \$30 billion combined trade deficit with Mexico and Canada. Jobs leave America.

The second point is we ought to have the courage in this Chamber to shut off the tax incentive that exists in our tax laws telling firms, "Move your jobs overseas and we will give you a tax break." I am still waiting for one person to stand up and say, "I support that provision," but we cannot get it repealed.

We have a tax incentive to move jobs overseas. Finally, another step of paycheck and jobs issues is the minimum wage. Yes, we care about the minimum wage. The fact is, a whole lot of folks in this country work for minimum wage and have now been, for 5 years, at the bottom rung of the economic ladder without a 1-cent increase.

The last time the minimum wage was increased, on April 1, 1991, the stock market was at 2881. It is now almost double that. The minimum wage has not moved a cent. But CEO's at the top of the economic ladder got a 23-percent increase in their compensation last year—an average of \$11,000-a-day compensation for the CEO's at the top of the ladder. But it is \$8,800 a year, full-time minimum wage, for the folks at the bottom. They have not had an adjustment for 5 years.

I say to some, if you do not believe in the minimum wage, bring a bill to the floor to try to repeal it. If you believe there ought to be a minimum wage, then you ought to believe in an adjustment at some point. The question is how much and when. Let us discuss that.

If I might, in the last minute, read again a letter I received last week from a young woman who has four children, has had a tough life. She has had setbacks almost every minute, every time they turn around, it seems. Their trailer house burns and they lose everything, or there are operations or medical problems with the four children. She, in a four-page letter, says:

How can we make it like this. I wish somebody in an official capacity could be the one to tell my boys they can't play baseball this summer because I can't afford the \$25 fee for each of them, let alone the money for bats and gloves they would need. We don't spend our money on alcohol or drugs. We don't go out on the town. Our lives revolve around trying to make ends meet. Our dream of owning a home is long gone. We are better off, I know, than a lot of others who have to live on the street, but how far are we from that? One check maybe?

We are in that forgotten group of people called the working poor, the people that fall through the cracks of Government. We want to have something to show for working hard every day instead of slipping further in the hole. We are suffocating, and the future looks dim for us. I beg you shamelessly, for the sake of my children, to please help us find a glimmer of hope to help us dig our way out of this hopelessly grim situation.

This is from a woman and her husband who work at the minimum wage, are unskilled, and have suffered setback after setback and cannot find a way at the bottom to pull themselves up. They, for 5 years, have had their wages frozen because there has not been a one-penny adjustment in the minimum wage. During that time, the stock market has doubled. CEO's are doing great. They got a 23-percent increase last year alone.

The folks at the bottom deserve some kind of adjustment. They are the voiceless that we ought to give a voice to. They are the hopeless that we ought to offer hope to, as we work in the U.S. Senate, and say we care about you and we are going to try to do something to offer some help to those on the bottom rung of the economic ladder. I hope we can do that together in a bipartisan way in this Chamber in the coming weeks.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Chair recognizes the Senator from Missouri to speak for up to 5 minutes.

CUTS IN THE VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION

Mr. BOND. Thank you, Mr. President. I rise today to make the basic and simple point that numbers do not lie. I am chairman of the Veterans' Affairs/HUD Appropriations Subcommittee. I have been very much concerned about making sure that the people who serve this country in the military get the kind of care that has been promised by the Veterans' Administration.

The VA deals, primarily, with those who have suffered war-related injuries, and who are medically indigent now. Yes, there are efficiencies that can be

made and there are certain steps being taken within the VA to operate more soundly. But I was shocked when I saw the President's proposal for Veterans' Administration spending for the next 6 years.

The President now says he wants to balance the budget. But how does he do it? Well, Mr. President, he takes it out of the vitally important medical care and health care services for the veterans. I joined with Chairman PETE DOMENICI to beat back efforts by our Democratic colleagues in the subcommittee to substitute the President's budget, which he claims gets us to balance. I thought it was so serious that I wanted to speak on the floor. I spoke this weekend back home in Missouri, talking about the tremendous decline that the Clinton budget proposes for Veterans' Administration spending over the next 6 years, which is almost 23 percent.

Mr. President, the Veterans' Administration cannot live with that kind of cut. That is the kind of cut that the President proposes the VA will have to follow to get to a balanced budget for the entire Government in the year 2002. At least the President agrees that we need to get to a balanced budget. But does he really mean this budget?

Well, Mr. President, it was very interesting to me to read in the newspaper on Saturday morning—in the St. Louis newspaper—a report by political correspondent, Jo Mannies, who called the White House after I presented this information and she says: "A White House aide replied that Bond was misrepresenting the facts."

Misrepresenting the facts? Mr. President, here are the facts. Under the Clinton budget, the Veterans' Administration have a budget authority that goes from \$17.3 billion in 1997, to \$15.9 billion in 1998, to \$14.5 billion, to \$13.0 billion, to \$13.29 billion, to \$13.8 billion. That comes out to be a \$12.979 billion cut in Veterans' Administration funding in that 6-year period.

Can the VA live with that? No. Secretary Jesse Brown said, when I asked him before the Appropriations Committee, "Are you planning to live with this budget?" He said, "I am not planning to live with it. I am not planning to live with your budget to green line"—which at that time was a flat line—"nor am I planning to live with the President's line." Secretary Brown went on to say, "I think his budget means something to me because he has given his word that he is going to negotiate with the veterans' community."

Really? Does the President not mean what he said when he presented the balanced budget that shows these cuts? The interesting part of the story, the White House aide Jo Mannies referred to was Lawrence Haas of the White House Office of Management and Budget. He said the Republicans were misrepresenting their plans and the President when it comes to spending for veterans.

President Clinton's 1997 budget plan contains an outline for reaching a bal-

anced budget by 2002. "The outline cites across-the-board spending cuts of equal percentages for most discretionary programs, including the VA," he said. "The outline is not a hard and fast proposal for any of the programs," he said, "because the President and the Congress review discretionary programs each year." He said that he expected changes for many of the specific programs. He said, "If past practices continue, the VA would be treated well and wouldn't experience much, if any, of a cut."

Mr. President, we have the President presenting a budget showing that he gets to balance by making a 23-percent cut in the Veterans Administration. Oh, incidentally, it is not an across-the-board cut because the President, at the same time, proposes a 28-percent increase in the spending on AmeriCorps, our national service.

Mr. President, we are left with the amazing proposition that the White House official spokesperson said that it is the official policy of the Clinton administration that you should not believe the official policy of the Clinton administration. The Clinton administration sent up a budget that shows a 23-percent cut, a \$12.9 billion cut over 6 years.

Mr. President, that is how they get there—a budget that I think has misplaced priorities. It does not make the cuts needed in Medicaid and in welfare spending, so they have to slash things like Veterans' Administration. Either they mean this and they are going to get to a balanced budget and the veterans are going to be unhappy, but they have an Office of Management and Budget saying they do not mean it. They have told the Secretary of Veterans Affairs they do not mean it.

So, Mr. President, we are left with this real question: Which numbers are lying—the numbers they presented in the budget, or the numbers they are telling the Veterans' Administration they are going to get?

I intend to work with my colleagues to make sure that the Veterans' Administration is adequately funded.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

TRIBUTE TO DR. W. JAMES RIVERS

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, it is no secret that a career dedicated to the service of others is a calling that garners minimal financial reward and often little recognition. Individuals will labor their whole lives working to make the world a slightly better place, only to receive few, if any, accolades or commendations. Today, I want to take this opportunity to recognize one person who has dedicated his life to God and his fellow man, Dr. W. James Rivers, and whose commitment to both has made South Carolina a better place to live.

Dr. Rivers' calling to the ministry did not come until he was in his thirties, but he knew early on that he

wanted to dedicate his life to serving others. Upon his graduation from the University of South Carolina, he earned a commission in the United States Air Force and found himself on the Korean Peninsula, where the United States and the United Nations were waging a war against the expansionist Communists of North Korea and China. The fighting in this conflict was brutal and it was not long before the young officer was in the thick of it, and during his time in Korea, he flew 50 combat missions against our enemies. When a cease-fire agreement was finally reached, and the shooting finally stopped, James Rivers decided to remain in the Air Force and climbed to the rank of captain; however, in 1958, he heard the Lord's call, resigned his commission, and began the process of becoming a minister.

After returning to school, Dr. Rivers began his second career of service, this time to God, which began with a 4-year stint ministering at Dutch Fork Baptist Church. In 1967, Dr. Rivers moved from Columbia, SC, to my hometown of Aiken, where he became the pastor of Millbrook Baptist Church. For the past 29 years, he has ministered to the needs of his flock with great compassion, and has proven to be an effective leader for his church, performing more than 1,400 baptisms, and more than 1,000 marriages. Additionally, under his direction, Millbrook Baptist Church has more than trebled in size, added both a Christian Activities Center and educational building, and has established three mission churches in other States. It takes a man of great spirit, ability, and energy to accomplish such impressive tasks.

Mr. President, Dr. W. James Rivers will be retiring from his career as a minister on May 19, and in recognition of his many years of selfless service, the mayor of Aiken has set aside that Sunday as Jim Rivers Day. I am pleased to join my fellow Aikenites and South Carolinians in recognizing and thanking Dr. W. James Rivers for all his contributions to our State. We are grateful for all his hard work and proud to claim him as a leader of our community.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is now closed.

WHITE HOUSE TRAVEL OFFICE LEGISLATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of H.R. 2937, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2937) for the reimbursement of attorney fees and costs incurred by former employees of the White House Travel Office with respect to the termination of their employment in that office on May 19, 1993.

The Senate resumed consideration of the bill.