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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 29, 1996, at 2 p.m.

Senate

FRIDAY, MAY 24, 1996

The Senate met at 11:30 a.m., and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Almighty God, we thank You for the gift of imagination that You have entrusted to us. With our imaginations You have enabled us to form, hold, and achieve images of what You can make possible. Coupled with the gifts of hope and expectation, You help us imagine Your best for us and for our Nation.

Now at the beginning of this new day, we form and hold a positive picture of this Chamber filled with Your presence. Knowing that we are accountable to You for every thought that we think and word that we speak, we contemplate how we should act and react under the guidance of Your spirit. We hold the image of how You want us to relate to each other as fellow Americans who believe in You and want Your vision for our Nation. We sense the civility and the greatness of character You want from us. Help us to express to others the same kindness, graciousness, and respect that we have received from You.

So renew our dedication to You. We are daughters and sons in Your eternal and inclusive family, and in loyalty to You we commit ourselves to work for Your glory and the good of our beloved Nation. I pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able and acting majority leader, Senator LOTT of Mississippi, is recognized.

Mr. LOTT. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

SCHEDULE

Mr. LOTT. The Senate will be in for a period of morning business today until the hour of 1 p.m. with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each. The Senate may also consider any legislative or executive items cleared for action. However, there will be no rollcall votes today.

As a reminder to all Senators, the next rollcall vote will occur on Tuesday, June 4, at 2:15 p.m. and be on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to S. 1635, the Defend America Act. When the Senate completes its business today, it will stand in adjournment for the Memorial Day recess until Monday, June 3.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I observe the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BURNS). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT, WELFARE REFORM, AND THE MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, since the American people put the Republicans in control of Congress, I think there has been a consensus—Democrats, Independents, Republicans—that we should balance the budget. We have succeeded now in making a balanced budget, which is supported by 80-some percent of the American people, a national priority. Perhaps no policy is more important than the personal economic future of Americans, the future of our children and the future of our Nation.

Last year, under Republican leadership, Congress did pass a budget that would be in balance by the year 2002. President Clinton vetoed that budget and denied America the brighter future that would have resulted in higher standards of living, more real economic growth, lower interest rates, reducing what Americans will pay for home mortgages, car loans, and student loans, and an increase in the savings rates, higher productivity, and relief from the crushing burden of debt.

But notwithstanding that, the President and his allies in and out of Congress who talk about a balanced budget say we ought to have a balanced budget. They may have a different way to arrive at one. So I think there is a fairly strong consensus at least that we should balance the budget. We just have not been able to come together on how we do that. We have tried private negotiations at the White House with myself and the Speaker and the majority leader in the House. They went on

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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day after day, week after week, 55 hours of face-to-face meetings. We could not come together.

So my view is that since almost everyone agrees we should balance the budget at least by the year 2002, we should take the next logical step and do what it takes to make certain that we fulfill our commitment to pass a constitutional amendment to balance the budget.

Last year, we had a month-long debate. We talked about all the pros and cons of a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. The final vote was 65-35. It was actually 66-34. Then I changed my vote to "no" so that I could use the parliamentary procedure to have a reconsideration of this vote, and I said sometime this year.

All we were doing, if you recall, was sending this to the States where three-fourths of the States would have to ratify the amendment before it became part of the Constitution. So we were, in effect, leaving it to up to the people or leaving it up to the legislative body closer to the people whether or not this particular balanced budget amendment to the Constitution should be ratified and be made a part of the Constitution.

I have made a number of statements both in the Chamber and in public that we would take up the balanced budget amendment again, and since my departure is imminent, I want to keep my word and keep my commitment, although I have no illusions about the outcome. So during the week of June 3, it is my intention to fulfill the commitment I made to hold another vote on the balanced budget amendment.

As I said, I am not under any illusions, but I think there is a great deal at stake. I think we have an obligation to future generations of Americans to make the effort. Only one man stands between the balanced budget amendment and the American people, and that is President Clinton. I hope President Clinton will change his position on the balanced budget amendment. I believe the upcoming vote will give President Clinton the opportunity to demonstrate the kind of leadership the American people want, but I am certain it will succeed only if the President lends his support, his unqualified support to the effort. Only the President can help encourage Democrats who voted for it in the past and then voted against it last year to give us the necessary 67 votes to send this to the States for ratification.

Again, let me make it clear. We are not making the final judgment when we send an amendment to the States for ratification. It takes three-fourths of the States. It would not be easy, but my view is we can send it back to the people, back to the people's representatives, closer to the people, and this also, of course, will give my colleagues who have supported the amendment in the past but voted against it last year another opportunity to come home again, an opportunity to do the most important thing we can be asked to do,

and that is to make a positive difference.

So I hope that President Clinton could repair the damage. I know he urged and probably persuaded at least six of our colleagues to vote "no." It is not very often we get a second chance to do the right thing, but we are going to offer that chance to the President and to others. I assume the vote will be the same, or maybe even one or two less, but this is a bipartisan effort.

I want to underscore that. One of the leaders in this effort has been Senator PAUL SIMON from the State of Illinois, who is retiring from the Senate at the end of this year. He has been working day after day, month after month, year after year for a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. He did not dream it up last year or the year before. As long as I have known PAUL SIMON, he has been supporting a balanced budget amendment, and so has the Senator from Idaho, Mr. CRAIG, and they have worked closely together.

At one time, we thought we had as many as 72 votes, but when the vote was taken, it was only 66. So my view is it is bipartisan. It comes down to one simple question: Do we trust the American people? Do we trust the State legislatures? I think if we do, then we will send this amendment to the States and let them take a look at it. The Founding Fathers did not give Congress the power. They reserved that power to the States and the people. For most of us who say we are for a balanced budget, this is an opportunity to give our States, whether it is Kansas or some other State, members of my legislature, an opportunity to say, well, it is good; it is bad; it should not be done.

So, I will let my colleagues know, and I will advise the Democratic leader on the precise time. But it will be sometime, probably, I would guess, along about June 4. But I will let my Democratic friend, the leader of the Democratic Senate, Senator DASCHLE, know a precise time. As I understand, there is no debate. So any debate will happen before. There will not be any agreement on any debate, but bring it up, vote, and then move on to something else.

Let me also say that I was prepared last night—because the President made a statement in Wisconsin to send him the welfare bill and he would sign it—and I may later today ask unanimous consent to bring up the welfare bill and pass it, send it to the House. This is apparently a bill the President wants. I do not assume there would be any objection on the other side. But, if the President is serious, we are serious. We will get serious in a hurry.

I will ask consent, we will send it to the House, and the House, of course, with the Rules Committee, they do not have to wait 4, 5, 6, 10, 12 days on an issue like this, they can do it in 3 or 4 hours.

So, if the President is serious about this, if he will just notify my colleagues on the other side of the aisle

not to object, we may pass a welfare bill here very quickly.

I have also been asked, and I have not discussed it with the majority leader—the majority whip, Senator LOTT, about when we would bring the minimum wage vote to the floor. I do not have a problem with bringing it to the floor at any time. In fact, we offered my colleagues on the other side an agreement which, had they accepted, we would bring it up as soon as we came back from the Memorial Day recess, but it was rejected.

It still seems to me that we ought to be able to bring it up; whenever they want to they bring up an amendment, we bring up what we want to bring up as an amendment. We do that frequently around here. We have two different views. I think there should be an increase in the minimum wage. I think we couple it with—we have talked about it some, about a teenage provision, where you want teenagers to work, the so-called training wage. We might increase those who are not covered, by a small amount, for businesses that are small businesses.

I have talked about this to Senator DASCHLE. I think there are a couple areas we may be able to agree on. There may be others who have other amendments we may not be able to agree to. But it seems to me, if we are serious about it, we ought to bring it up and do it very quickly. We have had enough debate on the action. We would be prepared to take care of that also on the week of June 3.

Mr. FORD. Will the distinguished majority leader yield for a question?

Mr. DOLE. I will be happy to yield.

Mr. FORD. When the majority leader says "the minimum wage bill," does that mean the bill that was sent over to us from the House; that would be a stand-alone offer?

Mr. DOLE. We have the right to amend.

Mr. FORD. I understand you have the right to amend it, but it will stand alone, it would not be included in the package as in the debate we had here previously in the Senate?

Mr. DOLE. I would be happy to work out something along that line with the Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. FORD. Rather than have four or five votes and then have a vote on the whole package, including the coupling as the Senator said, that we could have the stand-alone votes—I think we are very close to making some kind of agreement.

Mr. DOLE. I would want to consult, obviously, with my colleagues. But my view is there will be a minimum wage increase. It will pass the Congress. It will have some amendments that maybe are not totally pleasing to everybody in the Senate on either side of the aisle. In fact, maybe even the minimum wage is not totally pleasing to everybody on either side of the aisle. But I think, given the strong bipartisan vote in the House, and I think there is support, bipartisan support, for

an increase on this side, the question is what do you add to it to get it passed?

Mr. FORD. The only question I was concerned about is that originally we had four or five individual votes and then that would have been included in a total package, with the coupling of maybe a poison pill or two there, that the President may not particularly like and said he would have to veto that with that pill. If we get the House bill and then that is a stand-alone, and we get the amendments and let the Senate work its will, I think we are getting very close to an agreement on minimum wage. I thank the majority leader.

Mr. DOLE. I will be happy to take it up with the leadership on my side and, hopefully, be able to go to the Democratic leader and the Senator from Kentucky with some proposal to be accepted.

I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 1 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for not to exceed 5 minutes each.

Who seeks recognition?

The Senator from Louisiana.

WELFARE REFORM

Mr. BREAUX. Mr. President, I think our Democratic leader is on his way. I will certainly yield to him at the time he comes for any remarks he would like to make. But I would like to just take some time in his absence to comment on one of the comments made by the majority leader, Senator DOLE, regarding welfare and welfare reform.

I think there is a growing consensus on behalf of both sides of the aisle that a welfare reform bill is achievable. It is achievable in this Congress this year. I think we are getting very, very close. The President of the United States has said some favorable things about the welfare plan that has been proposed by the Republican Governor of Wisconsin, Senator Thompson. I think the President made it very clear on the previous bill, the so-called Dole-Gingrich welfare reform bill that the President vetoed, that he vetoed it for a very specific reason. He vetoed it because it did not provide for adequate health care for children and he vetoed it because it did not provide for additional child care funding for children of welfare parents.

The President's stated position on welfare reform is that it should be tough on work but also should be good for children. I think that is the right approach. I do not think there is anyone in America who wants to be tough on welfare who wants to be tough and unfair to innocent children who did not ask to be born into this world.

Yes; be tough on the parents. Yes; put time limits on welfare. Yes; cut

able-bodied parents off of welfare if they refuse to work. But let us make sure that this Nation, as great as it is, takes care of innocent children who did not ask to be born.

So I think the President made it very clear he would support his understanding of what was in the Wisconsin plan if it, in fact, took care of children by providing Medicaid or health care for those children and also additional child care funding. That is why he vetoed the previous welfare bill that had been sent to him, because it simply did not provide for those two major ingredients.

If the Wisconsin plan meets those standards, I think it is one that can be signed. I think the comments of the President yesterday while he was in Wisconsin really said exactly that, that he would support a welfare reform even if it's a Republican plan, or a Democratic plan; it doesn't make any difference who has authored it. But he also said, "So, what I say, if this is Senator DOLE's plan"—meaning a plan that provided for health care for children and for child care funding for children, that, if that is in the plan, "I think what he ought to do is pass his plan through this Congress before he leaves the Senate and I will sign it." That was a statement that I agree with, that, if a plan is presented that provides medical care for innocent children and if it is a plan that provides for child care funding so the parents can go to work, then it is a plan that, indeed, the President would want to sign.

So I think we are close. I commend the latest plan that I saw coming from our Republican colleagues for the closeness that it allows the two bodies to get together on an agreement. What I point out is that my review of what they are trying to do with their plan is, I think, very positive, in the sense that it does some things in the direction of providing more for child care, a very positive thing; it has tough new work rules in the Republican proposal, and that is good; it has a larger contingency fund for States in an economic downturn, and that is good. So there are a number of really good things in the new Republican plan that moves it closer to what we as Democrats have been trying to get accomplished.

But there are, I think, some deficiencies. I think these deficiencies are not such that they cannot be corrected, but the deficiencies, I think, are significant. For instance, they provide no vouchers for children after the parents have been cut off of welfare assistance.

What do you do, I would say to our colleagues, when you tell a parent you are not going to get any more assistance after 2 or 3 years—what are you going to say to a 2-year-old child, a baby, an infant, or a child that has no way to support itself and gets sick? Are we not going to have any help for innocent children? I think that is wrong.

Be as tough as we possibly can on parents and make them go to work and

say, "If you don't go to work, you are going to lose your benefits," and say, "There is a certain time limit that you have to get to work if you are capable of doing it." But, unfortunately, there are going to be some who do not meet those standards and unfortunately they are going to be some children who are going to be innocent victims unless we find a way to take care of them. I suggest if we do not take care of them in the short term we are going to be spending a great deal more money in the long-term taking care of medical problems.

So I suggest that we ought to bring up the welfare bill as soon as we can. Do not tie it down with other things that are still in dispute, like Medicare or Medicaid or other controversial issues. Let us face it. If we can get an agreement on welfare, let us do it and let us quit arguing about who will get the credit. There is enough credit for everybody. Everybody will win if we come to an agreement that makes sense. But everybody loses if we continue to fight it from a political standpoint and not address it from a humanitarian standpoint. Let us be tough on reform, but help children.

I am encouraged we are getting closer on welfare reform. I will again say the new proposal from the Republican side is a very positive step. This allows us to sit and negotiate over just a couple of items and be able to say, "Yes, we can produce a bipartisan welfare plan which will be good for the country."

I hope we can do it very quickly. I think it can be a product this President will sign very quickly. So what if you have a signing ceremony and Senator BOB DOLE comes down and President Bill Clinton comes down and signs the same piece of legislation. Is that not good for this country? Is that not why we are supposed to be here? I think the answer is yes.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum, since no one is apparently waiting to speak.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. 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. DORGAN. Mr. President, I see no colleagues on the floor today. We do not have record votes. I expect there are very few Senators here. I know we are in a period for morning business with a 5-minute limitation. I ask unanimous consent to be allowed to speak for 20 minutes in morning business.

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

Mr. DORGAN. If the minority leader or others come and need to take some time, I will be happy to accommodate them.