

Mrs. BOXER. So I think it is time to pass this Democratic agenda. I hope we will get that chance.

I yield the floor.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, I think we had some time allotted. I would like to take that time now, as much as I use.

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

MEASURE PERFORMANCE RATHER THAN RHETORIC

Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, we wanted to visit just a little bit about the program that has been set up by our friends on the other side of the aisle. I am delighted that there has been some kind of effort to put together an agenda. I think it goes to indicate a little bit about the differences that we have, in terms of solving problems for this country; differences that we have in terms of how we see the role of the Federal Government in our lives and, really, an issue about this whole matter of the end of big Government.

It is interesting. The Prime Minister this morning quoted the President and so on, saying "The era of big Government is over," yet our friends on the other side bring out an agenda that describes all the things that the Government is going to do. I have to tell you, I am a little impressed with the notion that it is a matter of some spinning for political purposes, rather than talking about what we really want to do.

The Democrats come out with an agenda to do something at the same time they are keeping from happening all the things practically that we decided to do this year. It seems to me it is a transparent kind of an idea of talking about it but not doing. Walking the walk? No. Talking the talk? Of course. And that is where we are.

So I really think we ought to challenge our friends over there to really take a look at what is happening here, and if they are talking, really wanting to do what they are saying, let us do it. Let us talk about health care. My friends on that side have not even allowed us to appoint conferees, to do something with the health care program that is there and ready to be passed.

Our friends talk about balancing the budget. The Democrats were in charge of this place and the House for 25 years and never balanced the budget. Now the agenda is: Balance the budget.

Madam President, when you and I were in the House, we had a budget called "Putting Families First." That

budget included a \$500 per child tax credit, it included anticrime initiatives, it included welfare reform, it included market-based health care reform, indexed capital gains. Our friends opposed it. They said, "We can't do that."

That budget would have been putting families first, giving an opportunity for families to do the things for themselves that we think they ought to do—putting families first. I guess all I can say is I am really getting exasperated with this process of ours where the idea is to see how much you can spin and how much you can talk and how much you can say but not do anything about causing it to happen.

It is almost cynical that we have now the most technical, greatest opportunities to communicate so people can have input into their own Government and, at the same time, it is more and more difficult to really understand what people are for. And as this election comes up, that is what we ought to be deciding: What direction do we want this country to take, not what people are going to say but, in fact, what they have done.

The records do not match this kind of rhetoric. President Clinton opposed the balanced budget amendment. Those folks all voted against a balanced budget amendment, practically all. The President vetoed the first balanced budget in a generation. That is the walk, that is not the talk. We have had that this year.

Most of us came to the Senate and said voters told us very clearly, "We have too much Federal Government, it costs too much and we're overregulated," and we have tried to change that.

Frankly, the Democrats have done all they can do this whole year to keep things from happening. We had an opportunity and we still have an opportunity: the first balanced budget in a generation to reduce the size of Government, telecommunications reform happened this year, line-item veto happened this year. It never happened before. Congressional accountability, product liability. We have done those things, and we were able to achieve some of these goals, understanding that Washington is part of the problem, not, indeed, part of the solution.

So, Madam President, I have been very impatient with this idea of getting up and making all these great speeches about things we are for, and then when we have an opportunity to do it, we have an opportunity to put it into place, then all we find is opposition, all we find is, "Well, I'm for a balanced budget, but I can't be for this one."

"I'm for welfare reform, but I can't be for this one."

"I'm for sending Medicaid back to the States some more, but I can't be for this one."

That is what we have heard the entire year, and continue to hear that.

Now they come forth with the families first agenda, promoting most of

the things they have opposed throughout the year.

Madam President, I just find it frustrating, as you can probably tell. It is time that we begin to measure performance rather than measure rhetoric. We have an opportunity to do the things that we set out to do this year. We still have an opportunity to do it. We have an opportunity to have medical reform, we have an opportunity to have some welfare reform, we have an opportunity to balance the budget, we have an opportunity to reduce the size of Government, we have the opportunity to have some tax relief.

Which of those things have been supported on the other side of the aisle? None. But then they have an agenda, an agenda because that is what the polls say, and that is what it sounds good to say to people. It does not matter that it is not going to happen. It does not matter that they are not walking the walk, it is just talk the talk.

I suppose this is fairly harsh stuff, but I can tell you, I have watched this go on now for some time, and it continues. Of course, as we get toward an election year, it becomes more and more heightened in terms of the rhetoric that is there.

So I hope that as we make some of the changes that need to be made in this Government, a government of the people and people deciding, making decisions—that is what elections are about, talking about what direction this country will take, and we have an opportunity to really measure performance, not rhetoric, and that is what we have an opportunity to do.

Madam President, let me yield to my associate from Minnesota.

Mr. GRAMS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

WORKING FAMILIES DESERVE SOLUTIONS, NOT SLOGANS

Mr. GRAMS. Madam President, we have heard a lot of talk from Washington recently about the hardships that are facing working Americans. Tax rates are up, job opportunities are down, interest rates are rising while paychecks are shrinking and take-home pay is not going anywhere at all. But the families trapped on this economic seesaw are feeling anxious and unsure about the future, and they are looking to the Federal Government for some change.

Most everyone agrees that a fundamental responsibility of Congress and the President is to try to help ensure greater opportunities for working Americans, so men and women can seek better jobs that will lift their standard of living, and the real debate going on in Washington today centers around just how that should be accomplished.

The Democrats in Congress are saying the answer is to simply raise the minimum wage. But that is a political

smokescreen that flies in the face of reality, an attempt to mask a 40-year record of voting for policies that have actually lowered family incomes.

The truth is that most minimum wage positions are either part-time jobs that are held by students, entry-level jobs for young people who are just trying to get into the work force, or second jobs held by men or women whose spouse is the primary breadwinner.

Raising the cost of doing business by raising the minimum wage is probably going to mean even fewer of those jobs. Some statistics say as many as 600,000 of those jobs will be lost, killing work opportunities for young people and those families who depend on that second income.

Besides artificially inflating salaries by hiking the minimum wage, it ignores the real concerns of many working Americans, working Minnesotans. Yes, they want better jobs that pay better salaries, but they have told me repeatedly that what matters most is not how much you earn but how much of your own paycheck you are allowed to keep after the Federal Government has deducted its taxes.

We have debated the issue and put the issue of minimum wage to rest by passing that legislation yesterday. Yet, the issue of tax relief for families has been virtually ignored in the Democrats' ideas recently in their recently released blueprint for their 1996 campaign season that they have entitled "Families First."

They are billing their plan as a roadmap for the future of their party. Congressional Democrats have not created an agenda for change but have instead produced a byproduct of some ambitious political polling. They say that they are in favor of education, in support of welfare recipients working, and helping families and helping children. In other words, if a majority of Americans told the pollsters they liked it, then according to the Democrats, they like it, too. "Some people say it is a tiny agenda, it is too modest or too bland * * * and my answer is that whatever it is, it is what people told us is their concern now." And these are the words of House Minority Leader RICHARD GEPHARDT, in what really was a surprisingly forthright nod to the power of election-year polls.

Let me say again what RICHARD GEPHARDT said. He said, "Some people say it's a tiny agenda, it's too modest or too bland * * *." Mr. GEPHARDT went on to say, "and my answer is that whatever it is, it's what people told us is their concern now."

Again, the results of their polling.

This tiny agenda, however, comes with a massive price tag. Paying for the families-first promises could cost American taxpayers an additional \$500 billion over the next 6 years. While the document is so intentionally vague that computing a precise cost estimate is next to impossible, it is clear that the cost would be enormous, especially

if you add that new cost onto the \$265 billion tax hike imposed by President Clinton and the Democrat-controlled Congress in 1993.

If the families first title sounds familiar, well, it ought to because back in 1994, Republicans in the U.S. House championed a proposal we called "Putting Families First," which I introduced along with Congressman TIM HUTCHINSON of Arkansas.

We introduced the families-first bill in 1993; and in 1994 it became the Republican alternative; and in 1995 we worked it into our first balanced budget that we sent to the President last year. So the families first title is not new.

Unlike the Democrats' families first, however, it was not a political statement, it was not a statement that we conjured up to coax voters in an election year. Our plan, our families-first version, was a well-reasoned alternative budget proposal that was specifically crafted to create new opportunities for working Americans, to give them those job opportunities and the better pay that they are talking about.

The heart of our plan was a \$500 per-child tax credit that would benefit 529,000 Minnesota families. Nearly \$50 million a year in tax savings would go just to the residents in my State of Minnesota. That is far more than the 12,000 heads of households in Minnesota who would be eligible for the boost in the minimum wage, according to data compiled by the Joint Economic Committee.

So what would have done more good? It would have been better to pass some of the tax relief that we have advocated and called for rather than a smokescreen of just a small portion in the minimum wage. Putting families first sought to further strengthen families by reforming the broken welfare system, combating crime through new get-tough initiatives, by offering sensible health care reform while reducing the deficit by \$150 billion. Republicans in both the House and the Senate embraced it as our alternative to the big taxing, big spending budgets of the past.

As a potent prescription for dramatic change, putting families first offered a strong defense of the American family. The Democrats' version of families first is a placebo, a lackluster concoction that will masquerade as some new medicine, but in reality it offers no cures.

Republicans followed through on putting families first by passing budgets in 1995 and 1996, balanced budgets, that built on that strong foundation. We have pledged to continue to fight for the \$500 per-child tax credit, for additional tax relief to make it easier for businesses to be able to create those better paying jobs, and a balanced budget that will reduce interest rates and the amount that a family has to pay on their mortgage, on their car loans and student loans.

Minnesota families deserve solutions, not a lot of empty slogans. If the

Democrats are serious, if they are serious about trying to ease the tremendous burden faced by American workers, then they will drop the campaign theatrics and they will help join the Republicans in truly putting families first by turning our promises into law. I think they deserve nothing less than that.

I thank you, Madam President, and I yield the floor. If there are no other speakers, 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. DASCHLE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. DASCHLE. Madam President, as I understand, morning business has expired.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. DASCHLE. I will use my leader time and only take so much time as may be required prior to the time we are prepared to go to the DOD bill, which I understand is imminent.

THE ACTION AGENDA

Mr. DASCHLE. Madam President, I wanted to call attention to the fact that yesterday, as we passed the important piece of legislation dealing with minimum wage, one of the issues that I do not think got the kind of attention that I had hoped it would receive, and really deserves, has to do with pensions and has to do with the significant new contribution we made to pension reform in the package of amendments that we added to the minimum wage bill.

That legislation dealing with pensions has several categories, one of which is an issue which a number of our colleagues have expressed a great deal of concern about and are prepared to support in a series of amendments dealing with women's pension equity. There is a significant disparity among working people, between men and women, with regard to pension equity.

Senator BOXER and Senator MOSELEY-BRAUN, in particular, added amendments to this package which would begin to address that disparity, which would begin to close the gap, the chasm, really, between men and women when it comes to pensions. I want to publicly commend them for their leadership and their willingness to work with all of us to find a way with which to begin making the effort to close that gap and to provide the kind of equity that I know all of our colleagues would like to achieve. Senator BOXER's provision will make it more likely that surviving spouses—typically women—will be able to avoid significant cutbacks in the level of retirement income provided while their spouses were alive. Senator MOSELEY-BRAUN's provisions