

to protect the physical health and the integrity of the people of America, in particular of the people who have been the victims of a welfare system the consequences of which have been tragic, to say the least.

The welfare reform debate is not a debate about a revolution for a change. It is literally a debate about a revolution for survival. If we do not reform the welfare system there are going to be continuing numbers of individuals who simply will not survive in America because our welfare system not only dehumanizes and devalues them, but it literally threatens their continuing existence.

The welfare reform debate is not just about change, it is about restoring hope, restoring dignity to the lives of individuals where hope and dignity have been destroyed. The missing ingredient in the current welfare system is the ingredient of hope, and the recipe for recovery must reinstitute hope. There is a structural problem with the current exclusively governmental system which precludes hope, which must exist if people are to get back on their feet.

This is a matter of human survival and national sustenance and survivability. If our society is to be sustained, to survive to be successful in the next century, we must end the current welfare tragedy. It is tragic, indeed, that the Congress, which has acted to help end this tragedy, has been met with a Presidential tragedy: That is, the President has vetoed the effort of the Congress to stop this human cost of America's greatest tragedy, our welfare system.

The President had the opportunity to reform the system but he vetoed it. Congress acted to stop rewarding illegitimacy, and the President vetoed it. Congress acted to stop penalizing marriage, undermining families, and the President vetoed it. Congress acted to stop the culture of entitlement, where individuals are conditioned to expect from Government rather than to work within themselves to solve problems, and the President vetoed it.

The tragedy of our welfare system is borne out in the lives of the children of America, in the horror stories of opportunities that have been dashed, futures that have been destroyed. I will not burden you with a litany that is all too familiar, but I think of one of the children, little Ariel Hill, who was less than a year old when she died, weighing only 7 pounds at her death. Her mother was an addict sustained by a system which makes no judgment about behavior, but just continues to reinforce behavior regardless of its counterproductivity. Her mother, irritated with Ariel's crying one afternoon, scalded her in a sink of hot water. When the investigators came to the apartment after Ariel's death, they found a list of the children in the household and the amount of welfare that each child brought to the family.

That is the tragedy of the welfare system where children, the most valu-

able resource of a society, develop a value only in the devaluing checks of an entitlement system. It is time we reform that system. We had an opportunity to do so and the President vetoed it. We cannot leave this task undone because the President vetoed welfare reform measures. We must proceed to change the system.

Our system has been rewarding the wrong values. We have rewarded decadence—the out-of-wedlock birth rate has exploded from 5.3 percent in 1960 to 33 percent in 1995. That is up to 80 percent in some of the cities of this country. We need to replace that system, which values decadence and rewards it with checks, with a system that values and rewards decency.

Our system has rewarded dependence. More than 3 million of the 5 million welfare recipients will be on the rolls for more than 8 years. The average length of time a person is on the welfare system is 13 years. It is a system that rewards dependence rather than discipline. It is time for our system to be changed. The opportunity that we had, and that we capitalized on to reform the system, would have substituted discipline for dependence. It is time for our system to reward discipline.

We have established, as the way of operating in Government, a system of debt. We need to replace that system of debt with a system of dignity, of integrity, of paying for the things we consume rather than displacing the costs of what we consume to the next generation. But the devaluing system of welfare dependence and decadence has been a system which has driven the debt.

We simply have to make a commitment within ourselves that we are not going to let this issue die. We are not going to walk away from the mandate of the American people to wage a war on poverty. We cannot leave in place a system that subsidizes decadence, that subsidizes dependence, that encourages debt—no. Our war on poverty will have to have a fundamental element of hope and will have to replace decadence with decency, replace dependence with integrity, independence and work, and replace debt with discipline.

The welfare reform measure which Congress passed provided us with an opportunity to change our current system—an opportunity that was extinguished at the hand of a President who vetoed welfare reform. We must reform a system which is not only costing children in many cases their lives and their futures, but is undermining a set of values upon which this country must march forward.

We must not turn our backs on this tragedy. We can ill afford to think that because there is a controversy on the budget that we can exclusively focus on it. We must address it. We must continue to be involved. But this war, this opportunity for change, cannot be confined to a single front. The budget is important, but we have an operation

on the right, an operation on the left, and we have a revolution to wage in terms of rescuing what we believe is the greatest of all the cultures that have ever graced this planet, the free culture in the United States of America. We cannot turn our backs on the tragedy of welfare.

So, today I rise, grateful for this opportunity to say we must look again to the responsibility that we have, to the call which we have received, to the demand which the American people are making upon us, to the expectation of this culture and to the duty we owe young people. It is a duty to protect, yes, their fiscal integrity and their financial futures, but it is also a duty to protect the very lives and the values and the potentials which they have. When we subsidize decadence as opposed to decency, when we subsidize debt as opposed to dignity, and when we subsidize dependence as opposed to integrity and industry, I believe we have to change that system and change it dramatically.

So, I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to speak, to remind the U.S. Senate that its obligation is substantial, its opportunity is significant, and the consequences of inaction could be as tragic as the system which is the status quo, because, unless we act to reform and to change it, we will have to live with it. And living with it has had deadly consequences.

Mr. GRAMS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

OF POLLS, POLITICIANS, PROMISES, AND PRINCIPLES

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I hope my colleagues made time last week to study a poll printed in the Washington Post. It took a close look at the American people and their relationship with the political process, and it was, at the same time, both enlightening and frightening.

Mr. President, 40 percent of those responding to the poll did not know the name of the current Vice President; 40 percent of Americans were not aware that Republicans control both Chambers of Congress; 56 percent of the people surveyed could not name even one of their Representatives in the Senate; and 74 percent were not aware that we serve 6-year terms.

Fully 67 percent of the people who answered the survey did not know that the U.S. Senate had passed a plan to balance the Federal budget.

The newspaper makes the argument that the problem lies in education—that the more knowledge an individual has about the political process, the more likely they are to care about what we are doing here in Washington. But I think an equally compelling case can be made that after decades of broken political promises, the voters have been conditioned to tune us out. They do not care about us because they believe that, deep down, we really do not care about them, either.

We should not be concerned that the people do not know our names or the length of our terms or who controls which Chamber. But we ought to be deeply troubled that so many people seem to have lost faith in us. And we should be especially concerned that the poll reflects these things at a time when Congress has made promises, kept them, and has demonstrated a sincere commitment to turning this Government around.

Mr. President, when the 104th Congress was gavelled into session a year ago, there were high expectations. There had been a dramatic transfer of power. People called it a sea change, a revolution.

There was a radical, new message that had begun to break through the noise of the usual political rhetoric. We talked about new solutions. We talked about Government as a service provider, not our national nanny, or caretaker. We talked about making Washington more accountable to the taxpayers, and a more efficient consumer of taxpayer dollars. We talked about shifting the focus of the Federal Government from advocacy on behalf of tax recipients to advocacy on behalf of the Nation's taxpayers.

We talked every day about our children and grandchildren, and what kind of future we would be leaving them if we turned our backs and did nothing.

One year later, our message has not changed, and we have passed a great deal of legislation in the last year to put real muscle behind our promises. But we did not count on running headlong into an obstructionist President, gunning for reelection, who was willing to deny the people a better tomorrow in order to preserve the status quo.

Mr. President, up until last year, I believed wholeheartedly in a mathematical absolute I first learned in high school geometry—that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. The idea has been around for so long—since the time of the ancient Greeks, in fact—that I never considered questioning it. But what I learned during the first session of the 104th Congress has forced me to rethink those early geometry lessons.

You see, there is no line more straight than the 16-block stretch of Pennsylvania Avenue that runs between the U.S. Capitol and the front door of the White House. So when the American people elected a new Congress on our pledge to balance the budget, cut taxes, repair the welfare system, and save Medicare, it stood to reason that the road to enacting those fundamental reforms, in the shortest amount of time, would be a straight line as well: Congress would pass the laws, we would send them up Pennsylvania Avenue to the President, and he would sign them.

But this President has managed to distort the laws of mathematics so badly that Pennsylvania Avenue has become not a straight line, but a tangled trail culminating in a dead end.

Today, those 16 blocks are littered with legislative casualties that never had a chance against the veto pen of a President who is dead set against even the most basic reforms.

Congress sent the President a balanced budget that acknowledges it is morally wrong to pass the debts of one generation onto the next. He vetoed it.

We sent the President a tax relief package that offers a \$500-per-child tax credit—and a lot of hope—to every middle-class, American family. He vetoed it.

We sent the President a bill that delivers on his promise to "end welfare as we know it." He said he liked it. Then he vetoed it anyway.

We sent the President a plan that moves Medicare into the 1990's, rescues it from bankruptcy, and reforms the system by offering seniors something they have never had access to through their Government-provided health care plan and that was real choice. Once again, he killed it with a veto. Given yesterday's troubling news that the Medicare trust fund lost money in 1995 for the first time in 23 years, a full year earlier than expected, and may not survive until 2002, the President's veto appears even more shortsighted and misguided.

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. GRAMS. When I am through, I will yield for a question.

Mr. FORD. I am sure it was part A, not part B. The Senator went over it with a broad brush.

Mr. GRAMS. It is part A. Congress delivered tax relief, Medicare and welfare reform, and a balanced budget to the White House just as we promised the American people we would, and they were all returned to us "V-O-A"—"vetoed on arrival." So much for high school geometry.

What I have come to realize, Mr. President, is that sometimes, the shortest distance between two points is not a straight line at all, but the route with the least congestion. What I want to assure my fellow Americans is that from now on, Congress will follow whatever line takes us where we need to go, and if that means bypassing the gridlock on Pennsylvania Avenue at the White House, so be it. We will not be deterred from pursuing the principles of individual freedom and restraint in Government that have already brought us this far. We moved an important step forward recently with the passage of the Balanced Budget Downpayment Act. The President may have vetoed our balanced budget plan, but our downpayment on it moves us \$30 billion closer to a balanced budget, and keeps our children from going another \$30 billion in debt, by eliminating a host of wasteful Government programs. It was not what the President wanted. In fact, his latest budget does not make any serious reductions in Government spending until the year 2000. But Congress controls the Nation's purse strings and in this politi-

cal climate, Congress must start taking these small steps in order to reach our larger goals. One of the papers in my home State interviewed a number of Minnesotans last week and asked what they thought about Congress and the President and our accomplishments of the past year. I thought the comments made by the mayor of Woodbury were the most insightful. He said,

We watch with interest but quite a bit of disappointment. They are more concerned out there with their political one-upmanship, political brinkmanship, political hassle of each other. There is a big gap in quality leadership.

Those are the very same thoughts being reflected in the kind of polls we saw in the Washington Post. Mr. President, if we are going to begin restoring the people's faith in their Government, we are going to have to earn it through quality leadership, and we are going to have to do a better job of communicating our successes. Every American needs to know that this Senate passed a balanced budget. More importantly, every American needs to know that we are not giving up until President Clinton has signed a balanced budget into law.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CRAIG addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

THE FARM BILL

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, this afternoon the Senate will once again attempt to wrestle with one of its key responsibilities to American agriculture, and that is to pass legislation that will craft new farm policy for our country and send the necessary message as to what we expect American agriculture to do in relation to farm programs directed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

I found it interesting yesterday that President Clinton has submitted his 1997 budget when we do not even have a 1996 budget, and we find ourselves here on the floor of the Senate today debating agriculture because the President vetoed agriculture. So while the President is now off campaigning across the country waving a 1997 budget, the Government does not have a 1996 budget, and we do not have a farm policy.

The Secretary of Agriculture has just entered the floor. By the 15th of this month, he is going to arrive at a crisis point in having to deal with the implementation of 1949 agricultural policy.

Last Friday on the floor of this Senate, the Democrat leader and his party blocked a farm bill. We offered a bipartisan farm bill, Democrats and Republicans alike. Senator LEAHY of Vermont, who is just about as liberal as I am conservative, came together in a bipartisan bill. Once again we were denied the opportunity to vote on that because we were told it would be blocked.