

to thank the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. SPRATT], my leader, for his good work in the conference, the conference report that as a Democrat I am proud to stand here today and support, although I agree with many of my colleagues that we should have had more time to study the language as written. But this legislation really contains many Democratic priorities. To begin with, it balances the budget without a constitutional amendment and continues the direction made and begun in 1993 by that very, very difficult budget vote.

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But that is only the beginning. The bill also includes the largest investment in our Nation's history since Medicaid, \$24 billion. This funding will help States provide health coverage for millions of uninsured children, and I really hope I can believe what I heard, that this coverage will be as good as State and Federal workers have.

Furthermore, the legislation restores Federal aid for thousands of legal immigrants and provides \$3 billion to help people make that transition so important from welfare to work.

These and other changes make good on the pledge that many of us made, led by the President, to fix the problems in the recent welfare bill, and I thank the gentleman from Florida [Mr. SHAW] for his hard work in this area.

And, finally, the bill will enhance Medicare's coverage for preventive care including, annual mammograms. The legislation also does spend \$1.5 billion to help more low income Medicare beneficiaries pay for that all important part B premium.

I also want to applaud the majority for agreeing with Democrats to drop earlier provisions on reducing employment protections for welfare workers and on reducing State supplemented SSI payments for 2.8 million elderly.

Mr. Speaker, the bill balances the budget while protecting democratic principles. This is a goal that many of us have been fighting for for a long time. I urge support for this conference report.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 2 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, a long battle began in 1989 when a fairly young Member of this House, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. KASICH], offered an amendment to balance the Federal budget to get our country's financial house in order. There were 30 Members who supported him in that long march. In 1990, 106 Members supported him. In 1991, 114 Members supported him. He did not offer an amendment in 1992, but in 1993, 135 Members supported JOHN KASICH in his effort to get our country's financial house in order. In 1994, 165 Members supported him in his effort to get our country's financial house in order, and then with the election of 1994 we had the dynamic class of 73 Republican freshmen who came in and helped this man and helped this Congress get our

country's financial house in order. In 1995, 235 Members voted to get our country's financial house in order, and the President vetoed that effort. In 1996, 216 voted for that, and the President vetoed it.

Today we are at a historic point. We are at a point where this Democrat President and this Republican Congress have come together to get our country's financial house in order and balance the Federal budget.

The President wanted more spending in certain areas, and this Republican Congress wanted tax cuts and changes to entitlements to slow the runaway costs of entitlements. This has been an effort of both sides, and this is an effort that needs to be supported.

CALL OF THE HOUSE

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I move a call of the House.

A call of the House was ordered.

The call was taken by electronic device, and the following Members responded to their names:

[Roll No. 344]

Abercrombie	Clement	Fowler	Johnson (WI)	Molinari	Schaffer, Bob
Ackerman	Clyburn	Fox	Johnson, E. B.	Mollohan	Schumer
Aderholt	Coble	Franks (NJ)	Jones	Moran (KS)	Scott
Allen	Coburn	Frelinghuysen	Kanjorski	Moran (VA)	Sensenbrenner
Andrews	Collins	Furse	Kaptur	Morella	Serrano
Army	Combest	Galleghy	Kasich	Murtha	Sessions
Bachus	Condit	Ganske	Kelly	Myrick	Shadegg
Baesler	Conyers	Gejdenson	Kennedy (MA)	Nadler	Shaw
Baker	Cook	Gibbons	Kennedy (RI)	Neal	Shays
Baldacci	Cooksey	Gilchrist	Kennelly	Nethercutt	Sherman
Ballenger	Costello	Gillmor	Kildee	Neumann	Shimkus
Barcia	Cox	Gilman	Kilpatrick	Ney	Sisk
Barr	Coyne	Goode	Kim	Northrup	Skaggs
Barrett (NE)	Cramer	Goodlatte	Kind (WI)	Norwood	Skeen
Barrett (WI)	Crane	Goodling	King (NY)	Nussle	Skelton
Bartlett	Crapo	Gordon	Kingston	Oberstar	Slaughter
Barton	Cubin	Goss	Klecza	Obey	Smith (MI)
Bass	Cummings	Graham	Klink	Olver	Smith (NJ)
Bateman	Cunningham	Granger	Klug	Ortiz	Smith (OR)
Becerra	Danner	Green	Knollenberg	Oxley	Smith (TX)
Bentsen	Davis (FL)	Greenwood	Kolbe	Packard	Smith, Adam
Bereuter	Davis (IL)	Gutierrez	Kucinich	Pallone	Smith, Linda
Berman	Davis (VA)	Gutknecht	LaFalce	Pappas	Snowbarger
Berry	Deal	Hall (OH)	LaHood	Parker	Snyder
Bilbray	DeFazio	Hall (TX)	Lampson	Pascrell	Solomon
Billrakis	DeGette	Hamilton	Lantos	Pastor	Spence
Bishop	Delahunt	Hansen	Largent	Paul	Spratt
Blagojevich	DeLauro	Harman	Latham	Paxon	Stabenow
Bliley	DeLay	Hastert	LaTourette	Payne	Stearns
Blumenauer	Dellums	Hastings (FL)	Lazio	Pease	Stenholm
Blunt	Deutsch	Hastings (WA)	Leach	Pelosi	Stokes
Boehlert	Dickey	Hayworth	Levin	Peterson (MN)	Strickland
Boehner	Dicks	Hefley	Lewis (CA)	Peterson (PA)	Stump
Bonilla	Dingell	Hefner	Lewis (GA)	Petri	Stupak
Borski	Dixon	Herger	Lewis (KY)	Pickering	Sununu
Boswell	Doggett	Hill	Linder	Pickett	Talent
Boyd	Doolittle	Hilleary	Lipinski	Pitts	Tanner
Brady	Doyle	Hilliard	Livingston	Pombo	Tauscher
Brown (CA)	Dreier	Hinchey	LoBiondo	Pomeroy	Tauzin
Brown (FL)	Duncan	Hinojosa	Lofgren	Porter	Taylor (MS)
Brown (OH)	Dunn	Hobson	Lowey	Portman	Taylor (NC)
Bryant	Edwards	Hoekstra	Lucas	Poshard	Thomas
Bunning	Ehlers	Holden	Luther	Price (NC)	Thompson
Burr	Ehrlich	Hooley	Maloney (CT)	Pryce (OH)	Thornberry
Burton	Emerson	Horn	Maloney (NY)	Quinn	Thune
Buyer	Engel	Hostettler	Manton	Radanovich	Thurman
Callahan	English	Houghton	Markey	Rahall	Tiahrt
Calvert	Ensign	Hoyer	Martinez	Ramstad	Torres
Camp	Eshoo	Hulshof	Mascara	Rangel	Towns
Campbell	Etheridge	Hunter	Matsui	Redmond	Trafficant
Canady	Evans	Hutchinson	McCarthy (MO)	Regula	Turner
Cannon	Everett	Hyde	McCarthy (NY)	Reyes	Upton
Capps	Ewing	Inglis	McCollum	Riggs	Velazquez
Cardin	Farr	Istook	McCrery	Riley	Vento
Carson	Fattah	Jackson (IL)	McDade	Rivers	Visclosky
Castle	Fazio	Jackson-Lee	McDermott	Rodriguez	Walsh
Chabot	Filner	(TX)	McGovern	Roemer	Wamp
Chambliss	Flake	Jefferson	McHale	Rogan	Waters
Chenoweth	Foglietta	Jenkins	McHugh	Rogers	Watkins
Christensen	Foley	John	McInnis	Rohrabacher	Watt (NC)
Clay	Ford	Johnson (CT)	McIntosh	Ros-Lehtinen	Watts (OK)
			McIntyre	Rothman	Weldon (FL)
			McKeon	Roukema	Weldon (PA)
			McKinney	Roybal-Allard	Weller
			McNulty	Royce	Wexler
			Meehan	Rush	Weygand
			Meek	Ryun	White
			Menendez	Sabo	Whitfield
			Metcalf	Salmon	Wicker
			Mica	Sanchez	Wise
			Millender-	Sanders	Wolf
			McDonald	Sandlin	Woolsey
			Miller (CA)	Sanford	Wynn
			Miller (FL)	Sawyer	Yates
			Minge	Saxton	Young (FL)
			Mink	Scarborough	
			Moakley	Schaefer, Dan	

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The SPEAKER. On this rollcall, 410 Members have recorded their presence by electronic device, a quorum.

Under the rule, further proceedings under the call are dispensed with.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2015, BALANCED BUDGET ACT OF 1997

The SPEAKER. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. SHAYS].

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. STEARNS], a member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, for the

purposes of a bipartisan colloquy with the gentlewoman from Michigan [Ms. RIVERS].

Mr. STEARNS. I thank my colleague for yielding time to me, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. RIVERS. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. STEARNS. I yield to the gentlewoman from Michigan.

Ms. RIVERS. Mr. Speaker, in today's House Action Report analysis of the bill before us relative to the Veterans Administration, that publication says that there is going to be a \$2.7 billion cut in veterans' programs over the next 5 years.

Unfortunately, this analysis makes no reference to third-party insurers or to this body's agreement to keep the Veterans Administration whole relative to third-party insurer dollars. This has caused a lot of concern here in the House, as well as out in the community.

Can the gentleman speak to this?

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Michigan for this question. I think it is very important.

As a member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and chairman of the House Subcommittee on Health, let me answer by saying we in the Committee on Veterans' Affairs have agreed with the proposal to allow the VA to retain \$600 million per year, or over a 5-year period it is \$3 billion, in collections from third parties.

But we are also aware of the uncertainty among veterans this policy creates. We in the Committee on Veterans' Affairs have addressed these fears by developing language in the bill that would authorize an automatic supplemental appropriations if collections fall short by more than \$25 million.

Ms. RIVERS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, today for the first time in the 15 years that I have served in the House, we stand within reach of a balanced budget. The question before us is will we finish the job. We stand here within reach of a balanced budget because we stand on the shoulders of those who went before us, Democrats in 1993, who leaned into this problem at great political cost. We paid for it at the ballot box. The deficit was ratcheted then at \$190 billion and rising. We voted to do something about it.

To frame the context of what we are doing, I pulled from my office shelf this afternoon the Economic Report of the President filed by George Bush on January 13, 1993, 1 week before Bill Clinton came to office. If Members turn to page 69 of that economic report, they will see that the Bush administration projected that the deficit for fiscal 1993 would be \$332 billion. The next year, 1994, they said it would be \$297, the next year \$265, the next year \$241, and this year, \$266 billion.

□ 1600

They had another track. They assumed that possibly we could rise to a

better result if we had higher growth in the economy. And in that case they assumed the deficit this year would be \$207 billion. Members know the results. As Yogi Berra says, you can look it up. It is a matter of record.

We passed that bill with one vote in the House and the skin of its teeth in the Senate. Guess what? The deficit came down in fiscal year 1993 to \$255 billion. The next year when we closed the books on fiscal 1994, it was \$203 billion. In 1995, when we closed the books on that year, it was \$164 billion. And last September 30, 1996, the deficit was \$107.8 billion. Phenomenal. We cannot deny it.

We are now looking and confidently expecting a deficit which will be this year below \$50 billion, probably below \$40 billion.

The question is, will we complete the job? Will we finish what we started in 1993 and claim the victory to which we are entitled?

I address now my side of the aisle. This is our legacy, and today we should lay claim to it by voting this bill up and by finishing the job.

When we started this year, it was not clear at all that we would be able to muster the effort, mount the bipartisan kind of cooperation that would be necessary to bring together a bipartisan agreement and finish the job.

I want to give credit again to President Clinton because as in 1993, again this year he leaned into the problem. He issued a call for us to come together, those of us who are on the Committee on the Budget, to sit and talk, then to negotiate and finally to hammer out the terms of a bipartisan budget agreement.

And I give full credit to the Republican leadership of the committee and of the House, because they responded in earnest and in good faith to that call for talks and for negotiations, and they stood firmly with the process to the very end. The talks were hard fought, no doubt about it. We can sit here and believe that the product that lies before us was hammered out, hard wrought. But throughout those negotiations, there was civility and cordiality from the beginning to the very end. That is why we come here with an agreement that I think we can call a bipartisan agreement.

I noted earlier that when we brought that bipartisan agreement to the floor of the House in the form of a budget resolution, in the form that we had negotiated it, 133 Democrats, nearly two-to-one, voted in favor of it. When the Committee on the Budget then put the resolution out to the committees of jurisdiction, nine all together, it picked up a lot of extra baggage. From my side that baggage contained some bitter pills. It was hard to swallow. We lost more than half of our support for this bill.

I voted for the reconciliation bill, notwithstanding all of those contentious provisions that were bitter to swallow for my side of the aisle. And

when I did it, I said, I am betting on the come. I have seen the bipartisan cooperation that we have had in the negotiations so far. If it prevails in the conference, I think we can clean out the bitterness in this bill and bring back to the House a reconciliation bill that a large majority on my side can and should support, because a large majority of the things in this will be things that were our ideas, our initiatives, things for working families who are our constituents and our supporters.

I stand before my colleagues today to say I think we have reached that result. I am not completely pleased with this legislation, of course not. But I have rarely had the occasion to vote for the perfect bill in the 15 years that I have been in the House. And I think that this conference, in this conference we have had far more successes than setbacks. We have a bill that is as close to the budget resolution as we could possibly make it.

This is called a deficit reduction bill. Most of the focus has been on balancing the budget. But in truth, this is more than just a balanced budget, more than just a deficit reduction plan. As I have said before and I think it bears saying again, we did not get so fixated on the deficit that we forgot that other problems exist in this country. Working families need relief. They need help, and we have tried to reach out and help them provide health insurance, ensure that they have got an educational opportunity, an opportunity for higher education.

We have taken Medicare and dealt with Medicare because it is the biggest spike in the budget, fast growing, high spending, we have to deal with it. We cannot ignore it. We have reduced the cost by a net of \$115 billion.

But we protected the beneficiaries, and Democrats can be proud of that because we fought hard for that. We saw that that had to be in this final package. We have not only protected beneficiaries, we have added \$4 billion in preventive care coverage to this final package, which is something, too, that we can be proud of.

There are lots of victories in here. I say to my colleagues on my side of the aisle in particular, count the victories. Count the wins that we have got in this package. Count the ideas that are our ideas, that we should lay ownership to and take credit for in the passage of this package.

I think this bill achieves far more than we as Democrats in the minority could ever have hoped to achieve acting by ourselves alone, even with the help of the administration. I am pleased with the outcome. I am going to vote for it. I urge all of my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Republican Conference, I very proudly yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. KASICH], chairman of the House Committee on the Budget.

Mr. KASICH. Mr. Speaker, you wonder about Ronald Reagan and his wife Nancy in California. This is his legacy, to balance the budget and cut taxes.

The effort to do this, to shake us out of the status quo, has been driven by the energy of a great Republican President like Teddy Roosevelt.

Let me say that there are many, many Members here who are winners. It could not have been done without the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. SPRATT], working very hard, in a bipartisan way, to sell this package. The Blue Dogs and my great friend, the gentleman from California [Mr. CONDIT], who came to the floor on a very tough amendment and gave us the votes we needed to keep the package together.

The Republican leadership, I look over at the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. HASTERT] and the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DELAY] and the gentleman from Texas [Mr. ARMEY] who came to this Congress to get this done, to balance the budget and cut taxes. Our Speaker, NEWT GINGRICH, who had the will at times to lead when it was difficult. The gentleman from Texas [Mr. ARCHER] who has been here for almost all of his adult life trying to balance the budget and cut taxes and cut capital gains. And there are just so many Members, the members of the Committee on the Budget, starting in 1993, Rick May, my staff director, who worked day and night, along with the rest of the Committee on the Budget staff. They all deserve credit.

But let me, in a nutshell say to everyone here, starting in the period of the Great Depression, my dad was on the WPA. Roosevelt decided we needed a lot of solutions. And the American people said, we are willing to send some of our power and some of our money and some of our influence to the central government. Over the course of the last 40 or 50 years, when we add up Medicare and Medicaid and civil rights and education, so many wonderful things happened over the course of that time.

But let me tell my colleagues where we are today, because everything in life really is a balance. Everything in life is really a pendulum. What this bill represents today, a balanced budget that is real, the savings start today, what this really represents, along with tax cuts that give people power, it really represents the dawning of a new era. It is an era where we recognize the limits of government, and we begin to one more time count on the strength, the innovation, the creativity and the pure energy of the American people, all of us, every single boy and girl, mom and dad, grandma and grandfather, to begin to heal our country. Because what Americans have been saying is, government did a good job to get us over a lot of the hurdles and government still has a job, but what Americans are saying today is, let me get up to the plate, put the bat in my hand, let me heal my family, let me heal my neighborhood,

let me heal my schoolhouse, let me heal my community and let me, working with my neighbors, begin to heal my country on the basis of my individual strength, innovation and ingenuity.

This is not the end of the day, obviously. We face a generational war that must be avoided. It is the passing of the baton in a great relay race from one generation to another. We, as the baby boomers, and we, as those who are nearing the time when we will retire, have a responsibility to our children and our grandchildren.

We have to make sure that we can pass that baton and that is work that lies ahead of us. But what is clear in this bill is that we are now committing to limiting the power of government and enhancing the power of the individual.

It is a start. It started by giving our senior citizens more choice. It is happening by giving our Governors more flexibility to design programs to help people that fit their model and their communities. It is a program that enhances the power of individuals through medical savings accounts. It is a program that puts power in people's pockets by reducing the size of Government and letting people keep more of what they earn so they can help their family and their community. That is what this bill represents.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, I say this to Members on both sides of the aisle, the third millennium will not be a time period where we will talk about the power of regulators or regulations or lawmakers. The third millennium is going to be about the power of the individual, the spirit that created this country and drives this country.

I want to make one final observation to my colleagues. There are many of you on both sides of the aisle that have a burning coal deep inside of your souls, whether it is in regard to children or whether it is in regard to national security or whether it is in regard to helping our senior citizens to prosper or standing up for the best education for a tool for everybody that breathes inside this country or for America to continue to be a bright shining light to the world.

I have one message for you: Do not ever let your colleagues tell you you cannot get there. Do not ever let your staff say, it cannot be done, the mountain is too high. If you will maintain integrity, if you will build a team, if you will be inclusive, if you will stay honest to yourself, I do not care what your dream is, you can get it done through this House. The message here today is that people working together with a great goal in mind, they can be successful and that this House works.

Let us support this bill and let us send a strong message across this country that we are going to win the future and ignite our country to do even better.

God bless you.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, it would be easy to join the administration and friends

on both sides of the aisle in their acclaim for their tax and budget agreements, unfortunately, I don't believe a "yes" vote is in the best long term interest of our country.

To be sure, the proposals are better than when the process started. They are more fair and do less long term damage. In fact, there are some elements I strongly favor: the adjustment of capital gains on the sale of residential property, certain adjustment inheritance tax on farms and small business, spending more money for education and the repair of obvious flaws in the welfare legislation passed last year. These are all worthy goals that I support.

In the final analysis there are still three basic problems.

First, the tax changes are premature. We have not done any of the hard work on balancing the budget. The tax changes are scattered and political rather than focused and economically driven.

Second, people most in need, students and working families, don't get enough and that which they do receive is not efficiently delivered. For example, students around America are clear that there are far better ways to provide assistance to make sure that young people get the college education they need. The tuition credit for tax deduction is an expensive indirect way to help them.

Third and most fundamentally, the long term structural problems remain unaddressed. Our challenges may be harder because we lose several years of potential progress while the long term problem gets worse. It continues the illusion that budget cuts and entitlement reform can be done effortlessly and without pain.

While acknowledging the good intentions of the crafters of these proposals and the progress they have made, they are still at their core a short term political adjustment when we need long term fundamental change. I will continue my efforts in supporting any reasonable efforts to achieve that basic goal.

Ms. FURSE. Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, I rise today in support of H.R. 2015, the Balanced Budget Act. I am pleased that the conference report before the House includes important expanded preventive benefits in the Medicare Program, including improved coverage of diabetes education and supplies. This is a long-overdue change, one that I have worked on for 4 years.

My daughter Amanda has diabetes. As a family, we know that diabetes is the only disease that is managed on a daily basis by the patient. If a person with diabetes lacks the education and/or the proper supplies to manage their disease, they'll do a poor job. When people do a poor job of managing diabetes they end up in the hospital, go blind, suffer heart attacks and strokes. Currently, Medicare won't pay for adequate coverage of self-management training and the necessary tools to manage diabetes, but it will pay for all the avoidable, preventable, costly complications of this disease. This legislation makes these important changes in Medicare and will improve the quality of life for people with diabetes. It is a remarkable achievement.

My colleague, Mr. NETHERCUTT of Washington State, also has a daughter with diabetes. Earlier this year, Mr. NETHERCUTT and I introduced H.R. 58 to improve Medicare coverage of self-management training and blood testing strips. H.R. 58, which has the support of over 282 members of the House, corrects two critical gaps in Medicare coverage which result in

thousands more emergency room visits, increased hospitalizations, and cases of blindness, amputation and stroke. I am pleased to report that the conference report includes improved coverage of self-management training and blood-testing strips, as well as blood glucose monitors. This is a dramatic achievement that will save billions of dollars and improve the quality of life for the 16 million Americans with diabetes.

Numerous studies have clearly demonstrated how improving coverage of diabetes education and supplies saves money, and many private sector companies are implementing diabetes programs to save precious health care dollars. In many ways, the bill before the House today modernizes the Medicare Program and brings it in line with changes occurring in the private sector.

I want to thank my colleague on the Commerce Committee, Mr. BILIRAKIS, as well as Mr. BROWN and Mr. THOMAS for their support of making this change. I also want to again thank my colleague from the Pacific Northwest, Mr. NETHERCUTT, who cofounded the Congressional Diabetes Caucus with me. Together, as parents of children with diabetes, we have proven that there is no place for partisanship in tackling this devastating disease. This is a landmark achievement in the Medicare Program and I urge all my colleagues to support passage of this conference report today.

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the spending reconciliation bill, which builds upon the past success of deficit reduction agreements made by Congress, and outlines a plan to lead to a balanced budget by the year 2002. Each of us could and would change the priorities and adjust the way we arrange the tax expenditures which we will be considering tomorrow, but this agreement includes many compromises needed to find common ground.

Mr. Speaker, it's been a long hard path back from President Reagan's 1981 river boat gamble, slashing revenues and lavish Pentagon spending. Those dark years of annual deficits punctuated by rhetoric and finger pointing and constitutional amendments are no substitute for a good congressional constitution for the membership. This year the deficit is estimated to be less than \$40 billion through September 30, 1997, the lowest annual deficit since the late 1960's. While a strong economy has helped budget numbers, the lower deficit is in large part finally the result of major work done by the Democratic majority in Congress in 1993 working with President Clinton. Ironically, that year we passed a deficit reduction package with close to \$500 billion in deficit reduction, more than double the amount we are talking about today. Not one Republican voted for that package, but the improved budget numbers we are working with now in 1997 are principally a result of those tough choices some made in 1993. The current budget resolution builds upon solid framework and stands on the shoulders of the 1993 budget action. Most importantly, none of the 1993 measure is being repealed or greatly modified in the agreement being offered as a solution today. That speaks volumes concerning the validity of that 1993 budget achievement.

We have made positive progress in the annual deficit, and we must continue to make progress without extreme actions. Today's budget agreement, hammered out by Presi-

dent Clinton and the Congress, demonstrates that we can pursue fiscal balance without creating social imbalance. It extends the Medicare trust fund, even while adding several preventative benefits such as annual mammograms; protects the Medicaid Program; enacts the most significant expansion of health care in three decades, and reinstates fair benefits for legal immigrants lost in the name of reform in 1996. Without the need of a majority vote, each of us no doubt would change this budget. But we must examine and judge this budget based on what is possible politically and practically today, against the backdrop of 1995-96, when polarization and the shutdown of the Federal Government were employed to achieve the ends that the Republican majority in Congress sought, those goals were wrong. The public, the President, and political system rejected the Republican agenda. Today we are acting on an agenda that the public, President, and political system will accept, good for our economy and a sound fiscal policy path to a balanced budget.

Certainly one of the most important achievements of this budget agreement is the significant expansion of health care coverage for children. I have been a longtime advocate of efforts to expand access to health insurance for American families. This measure takes a step forward by expanding coverage for 5 million of the 10 million uninsured children in this Nation. This is the largest expansion of health care for children since the enactment of Medicaid in 1965. In fact, the bill before us today actually goes beyond the original budget agreement by providing an additional \$8 billion over a 5-year period from a new tobacco tax to assure that the child health care insurance is accomplished.

However, while I am pleased that Congress is acting to secure health insurance for children nationwide, I do not believe that the bill includes an equitable formula for distributing the funds to States. Minnesota has made pioneering efforts in providing health care coverage for children, so that it currently has the lowest rate of uninsured children in the Nation. However, because the bill's formula is based on the number of uninsured children in each State, Minnesota is being penalized because it has already worked to expand children's health care. Several of my colleagues and I attempted to change the bill so that the formula would be based on the number of children in poverty, but the budget agreement only allows for partial consideration of the poverty rate beginning in the year 2001.

While the Republicans did not sufficiently change the children's health formula, they have withdrawn several other negative policy proposals which were included in this bill when it originally passed the House. The pea and shell game that was put forth concerning protections for legal immigrants has been corrected; they are now conforming to the important commitment of the original budget agreement to assist low-income seniors with the Medicare part B premiums; they have dropped their proposal to exempt some health plans from State solvency requirements and consumer protections; they have deleted changes to medical liability laws to cap malpractice damages; and they have backtracked on several antiworker provisions, including a provision which would have undermined basic employment protections for people on welfare.

The devil of any budget is in the details and President Clinton working with our Democrat

budget leaders excised most of the devils which would have derailed this agreement. The numbers and policy recommendations in today's reconciliation bill reflect the fact that our country does not need to renege on basic commitments to the American family and our constituents in order to reduce the deficit and balance the annual budgets. We do not need to create a human deficit in the name of deficit reduction. We can invest in our nation's future through health care, education, infrastructure, and the environment, and still achieve a sound budget. In fact my view is that a human deficit would soon lead to a fiscal deficit especially in today's global economy.

This budget agreement serves as a fair outline for an economic agenda over the next five years while not perfect. Overall, this budget agreement is a very positive step, the product of compromise, which is necessary in today's political climate and tomorrow's. The budget builds on our past successes in deficit reduction, finishing the job in a reasonable, if not an ideal manner. No doubt some adjustments and modification will be made as we correct for economic realities and attempt to reprioritize in the years ahead. It will be important for us to protect an re-examine the priorities important to the American people as we work to craft the bills to implement the budget agreement over the long term, but I believe this is a worthy product putting in place. The public policy knowledge at our disposal with the political symmetry of our national government into positive action for today, for the benefit of the American families we represent.

Mrs. FOWLER. Mr. Speaker, 3 years ago, when we gained control of the House of Representatives, Republicans made a commitment to cut taxes, balance the budget, and save Medicare.

The spending and tax relief bills we take up this week represent the fulfillment of those promises. The Balanced Budget Act we are considering today is essential to balancing the Federal budget for the first time since 1969.

Of special interest to my constituents who are senior citizens are the provisions relating to Medicare. The Balanced Budget Act will restore solvency to Medicare by saving \$115 billion over the next 5 years and implementing structural reforms. These reforms include giving new health care choices to seniors, including provider-sponsored networks; a demonstration program for medical savings accounts, which would permit 390,000 MSA plans; and new benefits, including mammograms and Pap smears, screening for prostate and colorectal cancer, and a program to help with diabetes management.

Mr. Chairman, this is the kind of news that really means something to people. I am pleased and proud that I can go home during the August recess and tell my constituents that their elected Representatives have taken responsibility for the fiscal health of this Nation—and for the future of their children and grandchildren—by preserving Medicare, giving them back more of the hard-earned money, and balancing the budget.

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, the spending reconciliation bill before us has a number of important and commendable provisions. At the same time, like many compromises, it includes some provisions which I consider quite objectionable.

On the positive side, the bill represents the first major expansion of health care in many

years by establishing a \$24 billion program to insure our Nation's children. Extending health care to as many as 10 million uninsured children has been one of my most important goals, and this bill takes the first step in that direction.

The bill also makes useful and important reforms of the Medicare Program that will extend solvency of the Medicare trust fund, while expanding new preventative services and adding consumer protections. Similarly, new consumer protections have been added to the Medicaid Program.

Unfortunately, despite these commendable provisions, we should not delude ourselves that this bill will likely provide a balanced budget, in part because it uses \$24 billion in phony revenues from sale of the public spectrum. These telecommunications provisions will give away the public spectrum for pennies on the dollar, and tamper with the public's Universal Service Fund that provides affordable telephone service to all areas of the country.

In addition, I have serious problems with some of the Medicare provisions, such as medical savings accounts and private fee-for-service plans, that threaten the long-term viability of Medicare.

I also have strong objections to the provisions in this bill that make unnecessary cuts in our veterans' health programs by as much as 20 percent. This is undoubtedly the worst place we could choose to balance the budget.

Any bill that is so comprehensive and filled with compromise is bound to have both very good and very bad provisions, but as a Member of Congress we must choose either yes or no. In this case, Mr. Speaker, I believe there are too many important provisions in this bill, particularly in improved health care, to turn it down.

Therefore, I intend to vote yes to this conference report.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH

The most significant achievement in this budget, which I have fought hard to achieve, is a \$24 billion in new spending for a new health insurance program for at least half of the 10 million uninsured children in this country.

These children in the families of working Americans will now have a real chance at access to vital health services, such as the prescriptions they need when they have an earache or a sore throat, and eyeglasses so they can read the blackboard in school.

There is no better investment that this Congress can make than helping children get a jump start on life by giving them access to health insurance to give them the opportunity to grow strong and happy.

SPECTRUM

The telecommunications provisions contained in this conference report have merely two flaws: They will gut vital telecommunications policy goals that have enjoyed bipartisan support for decades. And they will do nothing to achieve a balanced budget.

The Budget Committee and the leadership of this body have made it clear that getting a good score from CBO is more important than good policy. But this is not the congressional baseball game. That was played last night.

Today we are not playing a game where good score is the only objective—we are trying to do what is best for the American people.

One only needs to examine a few of the telecommunications provisions to answer that

question: The bill forces the Government to liquidate a valuable natural resource—the public radio spectrum—for pennies on the dollar. It requires the auction of frequencies used by the Government that experts say will put our country's military operations at risk.

It takes the unprecedented step of tampering with the Nation's universal service fund—a dangerous move that will hold affordable telephone service hostage to the budget process from this day forward.

MEDICARE

This bill includes many positive changes for Medicare—tough new fraud and abuse provisions; substantial consumer protections for Medicare-managed care; and excellent changes in Medigap.

I also noted that, thanks to efforts by Chairman BILEY and BILIRAKIS, the bill includes a number of proposals offered by my Democratic colleagues during Commerce Committee markup. However, the bill unfortunately includes several proposals that I fear will prove dangerous to Medicare.

Specifically, medical savings accounts and private contracts between physicians and certain Medicare beneficiaries, for health services outside of Medicare, are dangerous proposals. While this bill includes commendable limits on both approaches, I continue to believe they are inherent menaces to Medicare.

Also, the conference report includes a remnant of a very misguided Senate proposal for so-called private fee-for-service health plans. Even with the limits on beneficiary copayments and balance billing wisely included in the conference report, this is a perilous idea which chips into the foundation of Medicare and could lead to the crumbling of that critical foundation, brick by brick.

MEDICAID

The conference report includes several vital improvements in the Medicaid Program: It provides individuals with a choice of managed care programs; it establishes a prudent layperson definition of medical emergencies, so that people experiencing chest pains cannot be denied payment for emergency room services; it requires Medicaid plans to have grievance procedures for people who have been denied services; and it provides consumer information on managed care plans.

I am pleased that payments to community health centers have been preserved over the next 6 years. I intend to keep a close watch over these payments, so that we do not put these important health centers at risk.

I am concerned, however, by the repeal of the requirement of adequate payment to nursing homes, which I believe will threaten important protections of seniors.

Finally, while there was much in this reconciliation process which precluded a careful debate on these issues, I do want to express appreciation to my colleague and chairman of the committee, TOM BILEY and his excellent and hard-working staff for their willingness to work with members of the minority and our staff, to hear our concerns, and include our staff in important drafting sessions. I commend the committee staff for their professionalism and their cooperation. I also want to thank the hard efforts of our Democratic staff on this bill, and for their many hours of work on this bill.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. Achieving a balanced budget has been a major priority of mine since I first ran

for Congress. I am very pleased that today we will vote on a measure that will balance the budget for the first time in 28 years.

In addition to balancing the budget, important headway is made with this legislation in several areas. The Medicare Trust Fund is preserved to the year 2007. The package contains structural reforms and expands choices for seniors. The bill includes preventive care benefits for mammographies, pap smears, diabetes, prostate, and colorectal cancer screening, vaccines and others. Tough, new anti-fraud measures will increase accountability through stiff penalties for those in violation of the law. Medical Savings Accounts [MSA's] will allow tax-free annual contributions to an individually controlled account and can be used to pay for qualified medical expenses. The project will cover 390,000 seniors and would be combined with a high-deductible insurance policy to provide protection against catastrophic injuries or illnesses.

This bill also increases the freedom and options available to beneficiaries. Patients will finally be allowed to privately pay for services not offered by Medicare. Additionally, Medicare can no longer restrict providers' advice to beneficiaries about medical care or treatment. Beneficiaries will also be given a voice via a new toll-free number to report fraud and billing irregularities directly to the inspector general of Health and Human Services.

While I am in support of the provisions that will preserve Medicare to the year 2007, I also understand the need for continued reform. With this legislation, a National Bipartisan Commission on the Future of Medicare will address Medicare's long-term solvency crisis and make recommendations to Congress on how to preserve the Medicare Program.

In addition to the Medicare provisions, the Medicaid portion of the bill projects savings of \$13 billion over 5 years and increases State flexibility, allowing States to provide more cost-effective medical coverage for low-income persons. The legislation also reforms the disproportionate share hospital [DSH] payments through a revised formula designed to protect States from excessive reductions.

There are many positive provisions in this bill in addition to the ones I have mentioned. However, there are also a variety of provisions that I do not support. For example, I do not support increasing taxes and do not believe this increase is the appropriate forum to deal with the question of tobacco. I also have concerns about the children's health provisions. While I definitely want to see every child receive necessary medical attention, I do not believe that the Federal Government can or should replace parents in caring for children. I am also disappointed States like Texas will not be permitted to use nongovernmental personnel in the determination of eligibility for certain benefits. As this Congress strives to achieve a fiscally responsible government, programs like the Texas Integrated Enrollment System need to be given every opportunity to run as efficiently and effectively as possible.

In this bill, there is good and bad legislation. Ultimately, the good outweighs the bad. For the first time in 28 years, Congress will bring some fiscal responsibility to the Federal budget. Additionally, preserving the Medicare Trust Fund is critical to seniors and action is necessary immediately. For these primary reasons, I support the Balanced Budget Act of 1997.

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to oppose the balanced budget agreement. This deal is praised as a bipartisan victory—that we have balanced the budget and increased spending for some social programs. Nothing is further from the truth.

This balanced budget deal was achieved primarily by drastic cuts—\$115 billion from Medicare—the major health program for the elderly, and \$13 billion in savings from Medicaid—the major Federal program providing health care for poor people. The budget gets balanced by cutting Medicare payments to doctors, hospitals, and other health care providers. The budget deal freezes Medicare payments to hospitals at the fiscal year 1997 level—even though we all know that the demand and costs are rising. And this deal reduces Medicare and Medicaid payments for hospitals that serve a disproportionate number of low-income patients—the very poor—the uninsured. These include public hospitals like Cook County Hospital in Chicago and the University of Chicago Hospital in the First Congressional District. And the cuts also hurt those whose very breath depends on home oxygen. The budget cuts payments for oxygen and oxygen equipment. This budget deal was paid for with another deal—generous tax cuts that favor those who are better off. Only a quarter of these cuts go to people making less than \$100,000 a year. Thirty-six percent of these cuts go to the top 1 percent of income earners.

With due respect to the President, and my colleagues on both sides of the aisle—this budget does contain some hard-won provisions—but let's not forget they were fought for and won—by poor people, working people, and advocates for children and immigrants. This bill does include expanded health insurance for poor children. The bill restores benefits to legal immigrants who become disabled and it guarantees minimum wage and workplace protections to workfare participants. But 5 million children who need health insurance will not be covered. Legal immigrants will not receive food stamps. And our Nation's schools that need serious rebuilding so they can move our children into the 21st century and get connected to the information superhighway do not have the funds they need.

Last spring, I cast my vote for the Congressional Black Caucus [CBC] Budget. I was proud to vote for that budget. That budget both balanced and fully funded vital safety net programs like WIC and Head Start. The CBC budget protected the constituents of the First Congressional District. I represent a district where 20 percent of my constituents live in poverty. Thirty-six percent of the children under 18 in my district live in poverty. How could I vote for a budget deal like this when mothers in my district like Grand Boulevard watch their babies die at three times the national average?

My decision to vote “no” on this budget agreement is not a close call. I believe it is a disgrace. It is a betrayal of our basic democratic ideals.

Mr. DOYLE. I rise today to support this spending package, H.R. 2015. This proposal, combined with the tax package we will consider tomorrow, establishes a framework where, for the first time since 1969, our Nation will achieve a balanced budget by the year 2002.

Past efforts in Washington to achieve this type of fiscal balance have been met by par-

tisan gridlock and an unwillingness to compromise. This left the American people with a budget problem and no solutions, with a budget deficit growing larger each year.

During this most recent effort, however, Members of Congress and the President not only listened to our constituents and other affected parties, we also listened to each other. The result of this effort is the balanced budget proposal we are considering this week.

H.R. 2015 represents the spending portion of this bipartisan budget package, which outlines an intelligent solution to not only bring the budget into financial balance, but also to implement other initiatives that improve the lives and health of our most vulnerable citizens.

It is never easy reforming a program, such as Medicare, that so many people depend on for essential services. However, if left untouched, by the year 2001, the Medicare Program would no longer be able to pay for the services it provides to eligible beneficiaries. It is because of this financial instability that Congress took action to develop a proposal that extends the solvency of the Medicare Program.

The majority of the reforms included in the bill primarily affect health care providers by making changes to reimbursement rates or the method Medicare uses to reimburse these providers. This bill also expands coverage of preventive care for senior citizens, including services related to diabetes, osteoporosis, and certain types of cancer, and it includes provisions to further reduce fraud and abuse in the program. Additionally, to respond to an increasing use of managed care entities in the health care system, the bill institutes important consumer protections for Medicare beneficiaries, ensuring that seniors who enroll in managed care plans are provided adequate medical services.

This legislation will not only ensure continued access to health care services for Pennsylvania's seniors, but it also protects the Commonwealth's youngest residents by setting aside \$24 billion over 5 years to provide health coverage for uninsured children. This important initiative would provide essential health coverage to as many as 5 million children who are currently living without health benefits.

These initiatives will help secure a healthier future for our Nation, and, at the same time, ensure that our Nation's financial health improves as well. I am pleased to support H.R. 2015, which will balance the Federal budget in a manner that is fair and equitable to all Americans.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. Mr. Speaker, I strongly support the main intent of this bill, namely to restrain entitlement growth and balance the Federal budget. That is why I voted for the budget resolution in May as well as for this bill when it was approved by the House earlier this month. Since that time, however, so much has been added in the form of increased spending and increased taxes that I cannot vote for passage of the conference committee report.

As I have said many times, I did not come to Washington to raise taxes, whatever the source may be. I know that tobacco companies are an inviting target for those who are constantly seeking additional sources for governmental revenue. But the issue is not where the money comes from. I am no fan of the to-

bacco industry. In fact, I have voted in the Kansas Legislature for increases in the State tobacco tax and, since coming to Congress, I have voted against subsidies for the tobacco industry. Moreover, I have never accepted a dime of tobacco money in my seven campaigns for public office. The issue here is whether the Congress should raise taxes with one hand even while it reduces them with the other.

To put it simply, the Federal Government already has too much money. It does not need more. Although this tax is ostensibly to fund increased health care availability for kids, the House earlier this month passed, with my support, a far more responsible version of this bill, fully funding the program at the level requested by the President without a tax increase.

Furthermore, the increase in the tobacco tax runs the risk of robbing States of Medicaid reimbursement from the tobacco industry. I am told that this tax on the tobacco companies is credited against the obligations under their agreement with the States' attorneys general. I have repeatedly inquired whether the tobacco companies may be able to avoid some portion of their obligations under the agreement to compensate the States for Medicaid payments. Because no one has been able to assure me this is not the case, I am reluctant to risk taking this hard-won money away from State Medicaid programs.

This bill also contains unacceptable increases in Federal spending. While purporting to reduce and reform entitlements, it actually creates a new entitlement for children's health care, costing \$24 billion over 5 years, a full \$8 billion more than even President Clinton requested.

Finally, the bill reverses the welfare reform approved by Congress just 2 years ago. It significantly increases food stamps and other welfare spending, sets up yet another Federal jobs program costing \$3 billion over 4 years, and extends SSI and Medicaid eligibility to non-citizens even while benefits for American citizens are being curtailed.

There are, of course, many laudable provisions in this bill. Reforming of some entitlements and slowing the growth of government spending are crucial elements to balancing the budget. But my support for these positive elements does not require that I accept every destructive provision inserted at the demand of the other body or the White House. Unfortunately, what was a good bill when it left the House has simply been loaded up with unnecessary taxes and spending. It stands in stark contrast to the conference report on the tax portion of this balanced budget, which to a great extent remained faithful to our pledge of less government and lower taxes. When the House considers the conference committee report on the tax bill, I will proudly support it.

Mr. POSHARD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the conference report on the balanced budget agreement. I would also like to offer my praise and congratulations to all of the House and Senate members, as well as President Clinton and his administration, who worked so hard to reach this momentous agreement. Throughout my tenure in the House of Representatives, I have championed balancing the federal budget, and I am proud that this often elusive goal has finally been achieved. Although this agreement is not exactly as I would have drafted it, nor is it likely

to precisely mirror the priorities of any one member of Congress, it is nonetheless a good budget which will provide significant benefits to every American. In addition, I applaud the remarkable spirit of bipartisanship which has generally characterized the long and complicated path that led us to this point.

Of particular importance to myself and my constituents are the provisions of this budget regarding health care and education. I am pleased that more meaningful education tax credits than ever before will be available to American parents struggling to send their children to college. In addition, the increase in Pell Grant funding will enable more students to receive critical financial assistance as they pursue their education. Congress has demonstrated through this agreement its dedication to educating the youth of this nation, and I hope this will prove to be the beginning of a lasting bipartisan effort to help families of every income level afford higher education for their children.

I also believe that this budget agreement represents a victory for rural health care. As a member of the Rural Health Care Coalition and its co-chair for the last three years, one of my foremost priorities has been to restore equity to the AAPCC, which determines how Medicare reimburses health plans. This bill enacts an adequate minimum floor and, most importantly, a 50/50 blend over six years, which will provide rural seniors with increased health care options. In addition, this agreement establishes a limited-service hospital model that will allow rural hospitals to remain financially viable. We have also taken steps in regard to rural referral centers, including permitting them to be reclassified for the purposes of disproportionate share hospital payments. All of these provisions were included in H.R. 1189, the Rural Health Care Improvement Act of 1997, which I co-authored. These, combined with numerous other valuable provisions, represent a significant step forward for our rural residents.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I am proud that this Congress will have the honor of reaching an agreement to balance the federal budget for the first time in decades, and I urge my colleagues to vote in support of it. It is a victory for our children and grandchildren and a monumental achievement for us all.

Mr. BORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 2015, the Budget Reconciliation Spending Act Conference Report.

I am no stranger to the tough, courageous decisions that must be made to balance our budget. In 1993, when faced with a record \$290 billion deficit, Democrats, including myself, stood tall and—without a single Republican vote—passed the original “Balanced Budget Plan,” which has reduced the deficit almost 90 percent. As a result of the 1993 budget, the deficit has been reduced every year for five years in a row for the first time since Harry Truman was in the White House. In fact, many economists project that the 1993 Budget Plan will balance the budget next year if no other plan is passed.

While the Majority Leader prefers to credit the free-spending economic policy of President Reagan, the Congressional Budget Office projects that—without the 1993 Budget Plan—we would be facing a deficit of \$319 billion right now, and a whopping \$519 billion by the year 2002.

Instead, today our deficit stands at \$30 billion—it's lowest point in three decades, and

we are on the threshold of balancing the budget. All that remains is to take the final step. Unfortunately, this plan is a step in the wrong direction.

Mr. Speaker, this spending plan would achieve most of its saving through deep cuts to two programs—Medicare and Medicaid. In fact, the \$115 billion being stripped from Medicare is, by far, the single largest cut in the plan.

Unlike many, I am not consoled by the fact that other, more devastating provisions have been eliminated from the plan. Until recently, this budget included proposals to means-test Medicare, raise the eligibility age, and set a dangerous precedent by requiring copayments from seniors for benefits that have always been fully paid for by Medicare. While these plans may have been tabled for now, H.R. 2015 would create a commission that will undoubtedly revisit these issues again in the coming years.

Dropping a few irresponsible, misguided attacks on the Medicare Program has not blinded me to the fact that this budget raises seniors Part B premiums \$275 a year by 2002. Abandoning plans to raise the Medicare eligibility age does not hide the fact that this scheme attempts to privatize Medicare.

It is ironic that on the 32d anniversary of the creation of Medicare, we are considering legislation that would dismantle the program. Simply put, Medicare works. It is one of the most successful programs in American history, guaranteeing health care coverage for every American in their golden years. And it works for one very simple reason—everyone pays into Medicare, and everyone enjoys the benefits, regardless of income.

Instead, provisions in this budget will destroy the universality of Medicare by allowing some Americans to opt out of the program. These provisions create Medical Savings Accounts (MSAs) and private fee-for-service plans that will give the healthiest and wealthiest beneficiaries the option to abandon the traditional Medicare system, leaving behind low-income and chronically ill seniors. Once the healthy and wealthy seniors have left the system, health care costs will skyrocket, quality of care will deteriorate, and Medicare will—as Speaker Gingrich predicted—“wither on the vine.”

Other spending cuts that will undermine Social Security and Medicare are much more direct. This budget cuts 61 percent of the total administrative funding from Social Security, Veterans Benefits, and Medicare, crippling their ability to run these vital and important programs. I am told it currently takes between six months to a year to process a Social Security claim. These cuts would bring that already slow pace to a virtual stand-still, inconveniencing thousands of beneficiaries who rely on these services for their sole source of income, and emergency health care needs. Clearly, this budget is not concerned about the health and welfare of America's veterans and senior citizens.

But seniors and vets aren't the only ones who bear the brunt of these spending cuts—hospitals that serve the neediest children and families will also take an enormous hit. The \$13.6 billion in Medicaid cuts that this budget calls for would come primarily from disproportionate share hospital payments (DSH). These cuts would hurt only those hospitals that serve the sickest and neediest among us. In addition,

the multi-level cuts contained in this bill make it impossible for struggling, nonprofit hospitals to shift the burden of the cuts and will eventually force them to close their doors. Those hospitals that are able to remain open would face the same burdensome cuts in funding, while being expected to absorb the patients formerly served by the closed hospitals.

The obvious result of this plan would be a sharp decline in the quality of care, inevitable job losses, and the closing of many hospitals in my district. Since nearly 15 percent of my region's economy depends directly on providing health care, these cuts would have a ripple effect that would be felt in every sector of the local economy.

Mr. Speaker, the Third District of Pennsylvania is home to over 101,000 senior citizens, making it the 20th oldest district in America. Well over half of all hospital admissions in my district are dependent entirely on either Medicare or Medicaid. Clearly, substantial cuts to these important programs would have a profound impact on the hospitals' ability to provide quality care to my constituents.

Few, if any, districts in the nation will be hit as hard as mine by these devastating cuts to Medicare and Medicaid. The absence of ill-considered provisions into Medicare that would completely gut these important programs does nothing to soften the crushing blow this budget will deliver to the sick, the needy, and the elderly in my district.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot, in good conscience, vote for a budget that takes money from the pockets of senior citizens, turns its back on the uninsured, and threatens to undermine the integrity of the Medicare Program. For that reason, I must oppose this budget.

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the conference report on this legislation to balance the federal budget by 2002. Let me stress that I am committed to balancing the federal budget, but I cannot vote for this compromise budget package.

I believe my ten-year voting record speaks to my commitment to balance the budget. In fact, last week I was one of 81 members who voted for the Budget Enforcement Act. Clearly, this was not a very popular vote, but it demonstrated my dedication to balancing the budget. Similarly, I have cosponsored and voted for Constitutional amendments designed to impose a balanced federal budget. I understand the benefits to the economy, my constituents and their families' futures of a balanced federal budget and debt reduction. I believe we need to balance the budget as soon as possible, and I disagree with too many elements of this compromise to be able to support it today.

In my opinion, there are several major shortcomings in the budget deal just finalized by Congressional leaders and the White House. Specifically the deal allows spending increases for existing non-defense discretionary programs—and the creation of new programs—which were required to ensure President Clinton's support and signature. These spending increases will lead to an expansion of the federal bureaucracy and an expected increase in the deficit until 2001, when it finally will begin to drop. While the spending increases are promised in the short run, the spending cuts that are required to bring the budget into balance are what we call “back loaded,” meaning that they will not be made until near the final years of the agreement.

Finally, the new tobacco taxes are unacceptable to the overwhelming majority of my constituents. Under this agreement, tobacco will be hit with a complicated new tax scheme which among other things will mandate an additional 10 cents per pack tax in 2000 and another 5 cent one in 2002. As you can see, an additional 15 cents a pack will be levied by this budget deal. I believe that this is an unfair attack on a legal product, one that would hurt nearly 45,000 tobacco farmers in North Carolina (including over 4,000 in the 10th district alone), and more than 31,000 workers in related industries in my district and the state. Moreover, this excise tax is regressive, hitting hardest those who can least afford this tax increase.

In sum, although I could not vote for the compromise balanced budget package, I will continue to work to balance the federal budget. However, we can and must do so without all the unnecessary spending, unfair taxes and budget tricks included in this particular package. In fact, estimates show that we could balance the federal budget in just a few short years if we hold down spending. Why wait until 2002, if we don't have to?

□ 1615

The SPEAKER. Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the conference report.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the conference report.

The question was taken; and the Speaker announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

RECORDED VOTE

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I demand a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 346, noes 85, not voting 4, as follows:

[Roll No. 345]

AYES—346

Abercrombie	Buyer	DeLay
Ackerman	Callahan	Deutsch
Aderholt	Calvert	Diaz-Balart
Allen	Camp	Dicks
Andrews	Campbell	Dingell
Archer	Canady	Dixon
Armey	Cannon	Doggett
Bachus	Capps	Dooley
Baker	Cardin	Doyle
Baldacci	Carson	Dreier
Barcia	Castle	Duncan
Barr	Chabot	Dunn
Barrett (NE)	Chambliss	Edwards
Barrett (WI)	Chenoweth	Ehlers
Bartlett	Christensen	Ehrlich
Bass	Clayton	Emerson
Bateman	Clement	English
Becerra	Clyburn	Ensign
Bentsen	Collins	Eshoo
Bereuter	Combest	Evans
Berman	Condit	Everett
Bilbray	Cook	Ewing
Bilirakis	Cooksey	Farr
Bishop	Costello	Fattah
Blagojevich	Cox	Fawell
Bliley	Coyne	Fazio
Boehlert	Cramer	Flake
Boehner	Crane	Foglietta
Bonior	Crapo	Foley
Bono	Cubin	Ford
Boswell	Cummings	Fowler
Boyd	Cunningham	Fox
Brady	Danner	Franks (NJ)
Brown (CA)	Davis (FL)	Frelinghuysen
Brown (FL)	Davis (VA)	Frost
Brown (OH)	Deal	Furse
Bunning	DeGette	Gallegly
Burton	DeLauro	Ganske

Gejdenson	Livingston	Roemer
Gekas	LoBiondo	Rogan
Gibbons	Lofgren	Rogers
Giltchrest	Lowey	Ros-Lehtinen
Gillmor	Lucas	Rothman
Gilman	Luther	Roukema
Gingrich	Maloney (CT)	Roybal-Allard
Goodlatte	Maloney (NY)	Sabo
Goodling	Manton	Sanchez
Gordon	Manzullo	Sandlin
Goss	Martinez	Sawyer
Granger	Mascara	Saxton
Green	Matsui	Schaefer, Dan
Greenwood	McCarthy (MO)	Schaffer, Bob
Gutknecht	McCarthy (NY)	Schumer
Hall (OH)	McCollum	Scott
Hall (TX)	McCrery	Sensenbrenner
Hamilton	McDade	Sessions
Hansen	McHale	Shaw
Harman	McHugh	Shays
Hastert	McInnis	Sherman
Hastings (WA)	McKeon	Shimkus
Hayworth	McKinney	Shuster
Hefley	Meehan	Sisisky
Hefner	Meek	Skaggs
Herger	Menendez	Skeen
Hill	Metcalfe	Skelton
Hinchey	Millender-	Slaughter
Hinojosa	McDonald	Smith (MI)
Hobson	Miller (CA)	Smith (NJ)
Hoekstra	Miller (FL)	Smith (OR)
Holden	Minge	Smith (TX)
Hooley	Molinari	Smith, Adam
Horn	Moran (VA)	Snyder
Hostettler	Morella	Solomon
Houghton	Murtha	Souder
Hoyer	Myrick	Spence
Hulshof	Neal	Spratt
Hunter	Nethercutt	Stabenow
Hutchinson	Neumann	Stearns
Hyde	Ney	Stenholm
Inglis	Northup	Strickland
Jackson-Lee	Norwood	Stump
(TX)	Nussle	Stupak
Jefferson	Olver	Sununu
Jenkins	Ortiz	Talent
John	Oxley	Tanner
Johnson (CT)	Packard	Tauscher
Johnson (WI)	Pallone	Tauzin
Johnson, E. B.	Pappas	Taylor (NC)
Johnson, Sam	Parker	Thomas
Kanjorski	Pascarell	Thompson
Kasich	Pastor	Thornberry
Kelly	Paxon	Thune
Kennelly	Pease	Thurman
Kildee	Pelosi	Tierney
Kim	Peterson (MN)	Torres
Kind (WI)	Peterson (PA)	Traficant
King (NY)	Petri	Turner
Klecza	Pickering	Upton
Klink	Pickett	Vento
Klug	Pitts	Visclosky
Knollenberg	Pomeroy	Walsh
Kolbe	Porter	Wamp
LaFalce	Portman	Watkins
LaHood	Poshard	Watts (OK)
Lampson	Price (NC)	Weldon (PA)
Lantos	Pryce (OH)	Weller
Latham	Quinn	Wexler
LaTourette	Radanovich	Weygand
Lazio	Ramstad	White
Leach	Redmond	Whitfield
Levin	Regula	Wicker
Lewis (CA)	Reyes	Wise
Lewis (GA)	Riggs	Wolf
Lewis (KY)	Riley	Woolsey
Linder	Rivers	Wynn
Lipinski	Rodriguez	Young (FL)

NOES—85

Baesler	Dickey	Kilpatrick
Ballenger	Doolittle	Kington
Barton	Engel	Kucinich
Berry	Etheridge	Largent
Blumenauer	Filner	Markey
Blunt	Frank (MA)	McDermott
Bonilla	Gephardt	McGovern
Borski	Goode	McIntosh
Boucher	Graham	McIntyre
Bryant	Gutierrez	McNulty
Burr	Hastings (FL)	Mica
Clay	Hilleary	Mink
Coble	Hilliard	Moakley
Coburn	Istook	Mollohan
Conyers	Jackson (IL)	Moran (KS)
Davis (IL)	Jones	Nadler
DeFazio	Kaptur	Oberstar
Delahunt	Kennedy (MA)	Obey
Dellums	Kennedy (RI)	Owens

Paul	Sanders	Tiahrt
Payne	Sanford	Towns
Pombo	Scarborough	Velazquez
Rahall	Serrano	Waters
Rangel	Shadegg	Watt (NC)
Rohrabacher	Smith, Linda	Waxman
Royce	Snowbarger	Weldon (FL)
Rush	Stark	Yates
Ryun	Stokes	
Salmon	Taylor (MS)	

NOT VOTING—4

Forbes	Schiff
Gonzalez	Young (AK)

□ 1643

Mr. CUMMINGS changed his vote from "no" to "aye."

So the conference report was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the conference report just agreed to.

The SPEAKER. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Connecticut?

There was no objection.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING TERRORIST BOMBING IN JERUSALEM

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on International Relations be discharged from further consideration of the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 133) expressing the sense of the Congress regarding the terrorist bombing in the Jerusalem market on July 30, 1997, and I ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The SPEAKER. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, and I do not intend to object, I would merely like to ask the gentleman from New York to explain the resolution before us.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. LANTOS. I yield to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. GILMAN. I thank the gentleman for yielding. Mr. Speaker, this concurrent resolution expresses the sense of Congress regarding the terrorist bombing in a Jerusalem market on July 30, 1997. The terrorist attack on a Jerusalem marketplace that killed 14 people and injured more than 150 is a devastating blow to the peace process.

The gentleman from California [Mr. LANTOS] and I have worked together in introducing House Concurrent Resolution 133 expressing the sense of Congress regarding these heinous explosions which were claimed by Hamas