

well for your work with people from all over the world.

While I could stand here and speak for a long time in your behalf, it is not necessary today because you are clearly going to be confirmed and your name is going to be sent to the President as the next Ambassador to the United Nations. But I believe I will close with just a couple of words in Spanish. Buena suerte, BILL. That's the simplest way of saying good luck and good fortune in Spanish. I have been privileged to work with you. I hope you will continue to work with those of us in the U.S. Senate and House who are interested in the United Nations succeeding. We think you have a big mission. We hope you can establish some inroads, in terms of the United Nations being a more effective and efficient body, so that the United States can truly continue to support its efforts and your efforts in behalf of our country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, I yield the remainder of my time. I suggest we go to a vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time having been yielded back, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of BILL RICHARDSON, of New Mexico, to be U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations? The yeas and nays have been ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 100, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 9 Ex.]

YEAS—100

Abraham	Feingold	Lugar
Akaka	Feinstein	Mack
Allard	Ford	McCain
Ashcroft	Frist	McConnell
Baucus	Glenn	Mikulski
Bennett	Gorton	Moseley-Braun
Biden	Graham	Moynihan
Bingaman	Gramm	Murkowski
Bond	Grassley	Murray
Boxer	Gregg	Nickles
Breaux	Hagel	Reed
Brownback	Harkin	Reid
Bryan	Hatch	Robb
Bumpers	Helms	Roberts
Burns	Hollings	Rockefeller
Byrd	Hutchinson	Roth
Campbell	Hutchison	Santorum
Chafee	Inhofe	Sarbanes
Cleland	Inouye	Sessions
Coats	Jeffords	Shelby
Cochran	Johnson	Smith, Bob
Collins	Kempthorne	Smith, Gordon
Conrad	Kennedy	Snowe
Coverdell	Kerrey	Specter
Craig	Kerry	Stevens
D'Amato	Kohl	Thomas
Daschle	Kyl	Thompson
DeWine	Landrieu	Thurmond
Dodd	Lautenberg	Torricelli
Domenici	Leahy	Warner
Dorgan	Levin	Wellstone
Durbin	Lieberman	Wyden
Enzi	Lott	
Faircloth		

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the President will be notified of the action of the Senate.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will return to the consideration of legislative business.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. HUTCHISON. I ask unanimous consent I be allowed to speak for 5 minutes as in morning business.

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

AMERICAN AIRLINES STRIKE

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I am going to submit a resolution this afternoon and ask it be considered. It has not yet been cleared. I hope it will be cleared so we will be able to vote on this resolution on Thursday if we do not have a settlement of the American Airlines strike.

Mr. President, I am submitting this resolution on behalf of myself, and Senator GRAMM. Perhaps others will want to come forward as well.

But, Mr. President, we have a very serious economic crisis pending Friday about midnight. If we do not have some agreement by the two parties, American Airlines and its pilots union, we could hold up about one-fourth of the traveling public at the beginning of a holiday weekend. We could cause 75,000 other employees of American Airlines all over our country to be laid off without pay. We are causing, if that happens, other employees of rental car companies—people who sell food to airports and to airlines—all of these people who have livelihoods, who have families, to possibly be totally deprived of their ability—

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, the Senate is not in order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, we are talking about the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Americans, and we are talking about even international travel and commerce and goods that are going into international commerce.

Mr. President, the effects of this strike are going to be so far reaching that it will have an economic impact on this country that will be quite severe.

The pilots union is meeting with the company as we speak. The deadline before a strike is midnight this Friday. We have the opportunity with the resolution that I am introducing to have a sense of the Senate that the President would use all of his persuasive powers to get these parties to sit down, and

that the President would be able to use his powers to appoint an emergency board which would automatically keep the contract in place for 30 days and then provide for another 30-day cooling-off period. This will give 60 days to these people to be able to work out their differences.

I think that the pilots union and the airline company, American Airlines, are certainly big enough people to be able to work out their differences and not cause the disruption of so many lives in our country and the economies of so many States in our country.

So I am asking that the Senate vote on this on Thursday, if nothing has happened in between. I hope the President will use all of his persuasive powers between now and Thursday to make sure that everything is being done to settle this strike. But if nothing has happened by Thursday, we want the President to use the powers that Congress has given him to call an emergency board together to give a 60-day cooling-off period so that the negotiations can continue.

This is something that Congress and the President have worked out in the past. This is the process, Mr. President. Let us step up to the line, and we hopefully will be able to work with the President to make sure that he has all of the tools necessary to do what is necessary to save this country from a real economic hit that could come within the next 3 or 4 days.

We can do something about it. The President can do something about it. And we are going to ask him to do that in this resolution.

As I said, I am going to submit this later. I am going to ask for unanimous consent to be able to vote on this on Thursday. I hope it is a moot point by that time. It is very important that the President address right away this impending crisis that can affect the lives of so many people and the families of so many people in this country and the economies of so many States in this country. The ripple effect is devastating. We can do something about it.

I hope that the President will use the powers that he has for that very purpose.

Thank you, Mr. President, and I yield the floor.

Mr. MURKOWSKI addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I thank the Chair.

BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Senate continued with the consideration of the joint resolution.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I counted it up the other day. This is my 17th year of having the honor to represent my State of Alaska in this body.

During that period I participated in seven separate debates on this floor on this very singular issue, and that is the amendment of our Constitution to require that the budget be balanced.

A number of years ago, several of us unloaded a big van on the steps of the U.S. Senate. In that van were mailbags. And in those mailbags were letters from our constituents in overwhelming support of an amendment to the Constitution that would mandate a balanced budget.

Mr. President, in 1982 the Senate adopted the amendment but it failed in the House. Since then, the amendment has failed in every year that we have engaged in this debate. In the intervening decade and a half annual Federal spending has increased nearly \$1 trillion and our national debt has quadrupled.

Mr. President, through this debate, my colleagues on both sides of the aisle have amply demonstrated the billions and trillions that we have been spending, and the meteoric rise of our national debt. I do not intend to repeat those numbers. As the 10-foot stack of budgets standing before me on the floor clearly show, for the past 28 years the Federal Government has been living on debt. I find that rather ironic, Mr. President, in view of the fact that you and I and our constituents back home have to balance, if you will, our checkbooks. But the Government goes through a process of lengthy debate and budgetary process of seeing what its revenues are, seeing what its expenditures are, and then whatever else it seems to need it is simply added to the national debt.

Mr. President, I want to talk about the awesome responsibility that we have as stewards of this Nation to face up to the enormity of the challenge that we are facing in changing the way we govern and have been governing.

Mr. President, American Government was transformed by the Great Depression. In response to this crisis, our then President Franklin Roosevelt in 1933 ushered in the age of social activist government, one of whose tenets was that in times of economic stress the Government would actively intervene to restart the economy. Thus was born the age of peacetime deficit spending.

Unfortunately, what has ensued in the intervening 64 years is that the Federal Government has become incapable of weaning itself from this addiction to deficit spending. Whether in periods of strong growth or modest growth, the Federal Government runs deficits. In fact, in only 8 years since the Depression has the Federal Government operated with a surplus.

But even that fact is somewhat misleading for I would note that the Federal surplus in those 8 years was a mere \$33 billion. Compare that with 56 years of deficits cumulating in a national debt of more than \$5.2 trillion.

Let me refer to the chart here on my left. I hope that the President can view this. It covers the next 4 years of the

current administration with outlays in 1997 of \$1.6 trillion to the year 2000 at \$1.84 trillion.

The significance of what is occurring here is we are having to pay interest on this accumulated debt. The interest is running \$247 billion in 1997, \$250 billion in 1998, \$252 billion in 1999, and \$248 billion in the year 2000.

I used to be in the banking business and I can tell you that interest is like owning a horse that eats while you are asleep. It goes on and on, night and day and holidays. No day is exempt from the accumulation of interest.

Here is our deficit, Mr. President: \$125 billion, \$120 billion, \$117 billion, \$87 billion. One can say that is good news. The deficit is declining. Let us look a little further.

But I would note that if we did not have to pay interest on this accumulated debt, if we hadn't accumulated all of these deficits, we would not have to pay nearly a trillion dollars in interest in the next 4 years and instead of running deficits for the next 4 years, we would have a surplus. We would have a surplus of \$122 billion this year, \$130 billion in 1998, \$135 billion in 1999, and \$161 billion in the year 2000.

My point is that at the end of this timeframe of 1997, through the year 2000, our outlays will have been a little over \$7 trillion, our interest will have been just under \$1 trillion—\$997 billion. Our deficit that we are adding would be \$450 billion.

So, if you look at where we are today, at the end of this year our national debt is at \$5.4 trillion. By the end of the year 2000, the national debt will be \$6.3 trillion.

So the increase in the national debt in the Clinton administration for roughly 8 years is projected to be \$2.2 trillion.

The significance of these figures is a bit startling, but the reality is if we were not strangled by \$1 trillion in interest on the national debt in the next 4 years, we could run a surplus and we could give every American family a \$2,500-per-child tax credit, not the \$500 that is in the Republican proposal but \$2,500. Or we could give every American family a \$1,500-per-child tax credit and every American citizen a 10 percent across-the-board tax cut. Or give every American a 20 percent across-the-board tax cut.

That is the significance of the necessity of this legislation which will take away deficit financing and allow us to develop a surplus, do away with the interest and get a hold of this continuing national debt which does not go away until we reduce the deficit.

Some say, well, why do we need a constitutional amendment to do it? My answer is rather simplistic, Mr. President. We have not had the self-discipline to do it ourselves. We could do it ourselves, but it has not been done.

I say to my colleagues who have any doubt about the wisdom of this amendment: The evidence is overwhelming that without the discipline of a con-

stitutional amendment, elected officials are incapable of fiscal management of the people's business, and it has taken the last 64 years to demonstrate this fact.

Some say we can balance the budget without this amendment. I say, OK, prove it. There is nothing within our post-Depression experience to suggest that this is even remotely possible. Eight years out of 64 years with surpluses totaling \$33 billion is hardly evidence that convinces me. Quite the contrary. It proves to me that we must have this amendment if we are ever going to end deficit spending as business as usual in Washington, DC.

Mr. President, the first 10 amendments to our Constitution, collectively known as the Bill of Rights, are the seminal protections afforded citizens in a free society. They were adopted against the backdrop of the 17th and 18th century tyranny that the kings arbitrarily exercised over their subjects.

The Founders knew that these rights—the freedom of speech, religion, and assembly—would not be guaranteed simply by congressional statute, for what one Congress grants, another can easily take away. That is why these fundamental rights are enshrined within our Constitution. That is why the concept of a balanced budget must also be added to the Constitution, for the evidence shows without any doubt that in this modern era of government, the President and Congress are simply incapable of balancing the budget except perhaps in rare and unique circumstances.

When future historians review the history of 20th century American Government, I fear that the legacy we will leave behind will be an enormous debt that we have passed on to the citizens of the 21st century. When this new century opens in just 3 years, we will have accumulated a debt of more than \$6 trillion, the carrying costs, as I have indicated, of which will be a quarter trillion dollars annually.

Who is going to pay off that debt? Well, consider, Mr. President, that the largest surplus this Government has ever run was a mere \$11 billion in 1948. In inflation adjusted dollars, that is equivalent to a surplus today of approximately \$84 billion.

If, starting in the year 2000, we could replicate our 1948 experience and have an annual surplus of \$84 billion, the national debt of the United States would not be eliminated until the year 2073. That gives you some idea of the legacy we are passing on.

In other words, under the most optimistic circumstances, the citizens who are alive for the first 75 years of the next century will be shackled with paying the debts their parents and grandparents and great-grandparents accumulated. And we all know it is unlikely we will sustain such large surpluses throughout the next century. More likely, it will take 100 years or more to pay off this debt, only if we start now.

Can there be anyone in this Chamber who believes that the citizens in America who will be alive in the year 2097 ought to be saddled with paying the interest on the debt that we are accumulating today—money, I might add, that is not being used to finance long-term investments or jobs or inventory in this country but money that is being used to pay interest on the national debt.

That is right; that is what we are doing.

In my view, this amendment is an economic bill of rights for future generations of this country. It is equally as important as the Bill of Rights we now take for granted as the foundation for this great Nation.

It finally will force Government to learn that it cannot borrow indefinitely. It rearranges the rules of Government as never before in our history, for it requires us to face up to the fact that we can only spend as much as we take in in revenues, as we dictate to our private citizens. And it stands for the proposition that building debt on top of debt is morally and fiscally irresponsible to Americans who have not even been born yet. That is what we are doing.

The legacy of the 105th Congress must be that we, at the end of this century, have recognized the responsibility we have to future generations, that we will no longer buy now and put off paying indefinitely. The time is now to finally stand up and change the way we have been governing for the past 60 years.

I thank the Chair for its attention.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER [Mr. ALLARD]. Who seeks recognition?

The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, we are under no specific time restraints per side, are we, at this moment?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. CRAIG. I thank the Chair. I thank my colleague, the Senator from Alaska, for making a very clear statement of what happens when a country creates the kind of debt which our country has over the last 30 years and the kind of priorities we have to shift to in funding simply to service debt.

The Senator from Alaska talked about the impact of interest on debt. Standing here or sitting here or stacked here beside me are 28 budgets, 28 consecutive budgets of the last 28 fiscal years of our Government that have been out of balance. In other words, that have had deficits that got spun into debt that have created the \$5.3 trillion debt we have today.

As a result of that, in the last fiscal cycle and the one we are currently in and the one we are currently examining, this Senate and the Congress at large is going to have to consider outlays of upwards of \$250 billion to \$260 billion to pay the interest on this stack of books or, more clearly spoken, on the debt that was generated by the

budgets that are housed in this stack of budgets.

Of these 28 budgets, 14 of them were intended to be deficit budgets, with no excuse or no apology on the part of the Congress that passed them. But there were the other 14 you would find in the language of the book that would suggest the intent was to balance in the future, or it was designed as a sequence of budgets to balance.

Interestingly enough, that is the very debate this Congress and our President are involved in at this moment. In fact, the President was here today in the President's Room just behind the Chamber discussing his budget proposal and the leaders of our Senate were there along with the leaders of the House comparing notes and deciding where they might work together to bridge the gap of the kind of impasse we have had and get to a balanced budget. But it is not a balanced budget. It is one budget of a series of budgets that promises to bring balance by a given time, in this case by the year 2002, as did 14 of these budgets.

Mr. President, 28 years later, 14 budgets in deficit and 14 intended to be balanced, we now are faced with the circumstance the Senator from Alaska has spoken about, a \$5.3 trillion debt, \$250 to \$260 billion of interest paid on debt depending on the rate of interest and the amount our notes are negotiated under, under the 3-year cycle under which our notes get renegotiated, and here is the rest of the story.

The President, and I do not question his sincerity, presents a budget for fiscal year 1998, of the U.S. Government, that will have about 250 billion dollars' worth of net interest costs, which is about 14.8 percent of the entire Federal budget. Here is what happens in a Government like ours when we have to commit such a phenomenal amount of our resource to interest on debt. Let me give these comparatives. This is work that has been done by our policy committee as an examination of reality because, when we talk about 250 billion dollars' worth of interest on debt, to serve debt, that means that creditors, people who buy our bonds, are owed money. A fair amount of that flows to foreign countries and foreign interest, but a fair amount of it flows to our own citizens and to their stocks and to their trust accounts.

But 250 billion dollars' worth of net interest in the President's 1998 fiscal budget is something like this. It is 21 times as much on interest as we are spending on agricultural programs. In other words, our priority in budgeting today is to spend 21 times more on interest than we do on agriculture. So our priority is not agriculture, it is paying our debt. Better spoken, I should say paying our creditors who have loaned us their money to service the debt.

What about international affairs? We are the last great superpower of the cold war period. We play an important role in the decisions of the world and

our presence oftentimes causes other nations to think differently about how they would conduct their business, both internally and externally. Yet, today, 17 times as much on interest is paid as on international affairs. So, for those of our constituents who say you are spending too much on foreign aid, I would say we are spending 17 times more on debt, interest on debt. Again, clearly spelling out the priorities that we have forced ourselves into as a great nation, simply because we could not control our spending appetite.

We pay 11 times as much on interest as on natural resources and the environment. This President, this administration, likes to call itself the environmental administration. And there is not a Senator on this floor who does not want to make sure that Government policy in cooperation with the private sector promotes a positive, cleaner environment. And yet, today, when it comes to priorities of dollars and cents, we pay 11 times more to service the debt created by these 28 budgets as we do on interest rates. Where are our priorities? They are to pay our creditors so we can continue to have debt.

We spend 10 times as much on interest as on the administration of justice. That is the Justice Department, that is the FBI, that is our engagement in the war on drugs, that is trying to curtail illicit activities that flow across our borders that somehow damage our citizenry. Yet, if you looked at our budget today, you would say that Congress is more preoccupied with paying interest on debt than they are with protecting our citizens against drugs, if you were to look at the actual expenditure of money. Why? Because 30 years worth of fiscal irresponsibilities have forced us to pay more attention to servicing our debt than the flow of drugs across our borders and the kind of impact they have on our citizens and our children.

We pay six times as much on interest as on benefits and services for veterans. A very large veterans group is now visiting our community, this Nation's Capitol. I was just visited by a nice contingent of Veterans of Foreign Wars. This evening, there is a large gathering of hundreds of Veterans of Foreign Wars in this city, men and women who put their lives on the line to protect our freedom. Many of them are concerned about the future of the Veterans Administration and the veterans health care delivery system, and will we honor our commitment to them and to the World War II veterans who are now reaching a peak in their need for health care services? Yet, today, this Government, by the nature of its fiscal irresponsibility of the last 28 years, is going to pay six times more on interest as on the benefits and services to veterans. Is it our priority? It has to be our priority if we are to maintain our fiscal solvency as a nation. We must progressively ignore the true interests and priorities of our country in light of paying our creditors.

Four times as much on interest as on education, training, and employment programs; yet our President, in his State of the Union, just this past week prioritized for our Nation and for the decade ahead the issue of our involvement in education at all levels. None of us disputes that priority. All of us recognize that our public schools are in need and, in many instances, they are failing. Yet, today, as we wrestle with the 1998 budget, what will be the first priority? Funding interest on debt created by irresponsible Congresses of the past that generated 5.3 trillion dollars' worth of debt. So where in all of these priorities will education fall? It is not going to be first. It cannot be first. What is first? Paying interest on debt. It has to be taken right off the top. It has to be taken right off the top of Government expenditures, just the way interest on serving the debt in the private sector is taken right off the top of all the money coming in. Because if you do not take it off the top, and you do not pay your debts or your interest on debts, if you do not service your debt you do not borrow any money. You are busted. You are bankrupt. And that, of course, is exactly what has happened to this country.

Now, nearing the largest single item in the Federal budget is interest on debt. So when our colleagues stand on the floor and say, as the President said the other night, "Oh, gee whiz, you guys have the votes and I have the signature. You pass a balanced budget and I will sign it," what this President knows and what he clearly has demonstrated in the budget that he has sent to the Hill, is that it is not in balance. It is about \$120 to \$130 to \$140 to \$150 billion out of balance for the next 5 years. Then, if he really honors the tax cuts—which he does not, because he agrees in his budget that he takes them back to fund the deficit to create the balance in the outyears, because he needs more money—what he is really saying is that his budget is not in balance. Why? Partly because of interest on debt.

Where does the National Government get \$250 billion to pay its interest costs? By adding together all corporate income taxes, that is only \$190 billion. Believe it or not, if we choose to double corporate income tax in this country we would just get enough and a little more to pay interest on debt. And all Federal excise taxes—that is \$61 billion. I think the point I am making, and the point the Senator from Alaska made, is we do not believe the Congress truly has the will. We do not believe any President, Republican or Democrat, can find the total will to work for, make the tough choices, and get to a balanced budget in the kind of timeframe and with the kind of reasonableness that the American people have demanded of us. That is why I and others so strongly believe we need the kind of constitutional framework to operate within, that creates the kind of political discipline and fiscal discipline to produce a balanced budget.

Who do we owe it to? We owe it to a lot of people. But most important, we owe it to future generations, because it is our children and our grandchildren who will pay off the debt. More important, if we continue to create debt without servicing debt, without bringing debt down in the future, more and more of the resources of our young, when they grow to maturity, will have to go to pay the creditor instead of fund the kind of Government they want, or to fund the kind of services they want from Government; but, more important, to keep some of their own money so they can have their own lives and their own families, and have their part of the American dream as our generation has had it.

There need not be any pointed finger or accusation as to whose fault these budgets have been, because, while most of them in the 28-year period could be, arguably, Democratic budgets, a fair number of them were Republican budgets.

A fair number of them were created under Republican Presidents. All of them were out of balance, and all of them had deficits, and all of them created the \$5.3 trillion debt that this country experiences today.

So I really think we ought to quit chasing our tail. The arguments that we have heard for the last decade are the same arguments, and the President makes the argument today that is certainly not original that a few Presidents before him have made but all who oppose a balanced budget amendment to our Constitution make. And that is that you cannot tie the hands of Government, that this would be much too rigid, that it would cause conflict within the economy, that it might cause us to not have the priorities in Government that we want.

What they are really all saying is that nobody is willing to make the tough choices, and 28 years of budgets clearly demonstrate that. That is why I think it is important that we reflect on the words of Thomas Jefferson who said that if there is 1 more amendment to the 10, the 11th amendment he would have added was to disallow the ability of Government to borrow, because he was fearful of a representative republic being able to vote itself money, and we have done that year in and year out.

As a result of that, we are now here wrestling, as all Presidents and Congresses do, with what do we do with the debt, what do we do with the deficit, and where do we find the money to spend on some of these critical programs.

The Senator from Alaska is right. When a nation overspends itself, when a Congress no longer prioritizes as to where the limited resources of the tax dollars go, but takes \$250 billion right off the top and says that has to go to interest on debt, Mr. President, it is time we change, and that is why many of us have stood on this floor and argued for years that this is the mechanism to bring that change, this is the

mechanism to bring the kind of political and fiscal discipline and responsibility that this Congress must have, because there isn't a Senator on this floor who can just vote it without the real discipline that a Constitution brings.

So this is why I hope that, in the ensuing days, all of our colleagues join together to support the balanced budget amendment to our Constitution and to give the citizens of this country the right, under the Constitution, to debate the issue in the capitals of their States to determine whether they want to change the organic law of this country to discipline this Government to cause this Government to react in a way that they perceive, as I, to be a much healthier action on behalf of the economy, the citizens and future generations.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who seeks recognition?

Mr. DODD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, at some point, I believe a unanimous-consent request will be entered into, and we will set out the agenda for tomorrow's business, including an allocation of time for morning business, as well as an allocation of time for an amendment, which I will shortly propose, to be considered.

I gather the respective leaders are working on that. In anticipation, Mr. President, I have been asked, in order to move the process along and make sure we have some business to conduct tomorrow, to submit an amendment. I will briefly describe the amendment this afternoon and then yield the floor. Based on the allocation of time the leaders are able to agree upon, we will engage more fully in the debate tomorrow.

AMENDMENT NO. 4

(Purpose: To simplify the conditions for a declaration of an imminent and serious threat to national security)

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Connecticut [Mr. DODD] proposes an amendment numbered 4.

On page 3, line 7, strike beginning with "is" through line 11 and insert "faces an imminent and serious military threat to national security as declared by a joint resolution."

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, that is the sum and substance of the amendment.

Very briefly, the proposed language on the balanced budget constitutional amendment, section 5, reads as follows:

The Congress may waive the provisions of this article for any fiscal year in which a declaration of war is in effect. The provisions of this article may be waived for any fiscal year in which the United States is engaged in military conflict which causes an imminent and serious military threat to national security and is so declared by a joint resolution, adopted by a majority of the whole number of each House, which becomes law.

My concerns with this provision, Mr. President, are addressed, I believe, by the amendment that we will consider tomorrow. Very briefly, if one reads this section very carefully, word for word, and I emphasize in my reading of this section the language that is of particular concern to me, and that is "is engaged in military conflict"—now the earlier language, "a declaration of war," troubles me as well—it seems to mean we would have to be in the midst of a conflict before we can waive the provisions of the amendment. There have been numerous examples throughout our history in which we were very much aware that an imminent danger was on the horizon and we, in preparation of that imminent danger, were able to respond, utilizing deficit financing to do it.

If you wait until we are actually engaged in that conflict, it seems to me you are running the risk of leaving this country very, very vulnerable, particularly with weapons of mass destruction that have the capability of causing great harm to our Nation.

This amendment attempts to address that issue. If there is an imminent threat to our national security—and then allowing for the different provision here—we would have a resolution adopted by both Houses where a majority of those present and voting would be necessary in case of some emergency circumstance—I see, for example, my good friend and colleague from Idaho who has some distance to travel to get to Washington—where something may happen and Members are not able to get back here as quickly as they may need to.

We would not be able to meet that constitutional requirement if the underlying balanced budget amendment is adopted, because you would need 51 Senators. The amendment that I offer addresses both points; that is, enables a response prior to actually being engaged in military conflict and allows for a joint resolution to be adopted with less than the whole number of each House.

Again, I will wait until tomorrow, Mr. President, to discuss this further. This is an amendment, I remind my colleagues, which has been raised in very similar form on previous occasions. Regardless of whether one is for the balanced budget amendment or not, it seems to me we do not want to place ourselves in the position, obviously, of restricting our ability, particularly where our national security is in imminent danger and our Nation is in jeopardy and not able to respond.

I cannot think of a single Member who would want to be put in a position, as important as balancing the budget is, where we would be willing to risk a threat to this country on that particular altar.

So I hope Members, this evening and tomorrow, before we have time to debate this amendment, will look at it carefully and consider it in hopes that I might garner their support when we

vote on this tomorrow afternoon. Again, this will depend on when the leaders are able to agree on a time for debate and a vote.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT AGREEMENT—AMENDMENT NO. 4

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate resume consideration of Senator DODD's amendment regarding national security beginning at 1:30 on Wednesday with the time between 1:30 and 5:30 equally divided in the usual form. I further ask unanimous consent that at 5:30 the Senate proceed to a vote on or in relation to the Dodd amendment and, finally, no amendment be in order to the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. DODD. No objection.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There being no objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, for the information of all Senators, the leadership has decided there will be no further votes this evening. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

(During today's session of the Senate, the following morning business was transacted.)

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, February 10, the Federal debt stood at \$5,302,292,166,231.47.

Five years ago, February 10, 1992, the Federal debt stood at \$3,794,592,000,000.

Ten years ago, February 10, 1987, the Federal debt stood at \$2,225,440,000,000.

Fifteen years ago, February 10, 1982, the Federal debt stood at \$1,033,575,000,000.

Twenty-five years ago, February 10, 1972, the Federal debt stood at \$424,269,000,000 which reflects a debt increase of more than \$4 trillion (\$4,878,023,166,231.47) during the past 25 years.

HONORING RALPH W. WRIGHT OF WEST POINT, KY, FOR 50 YEARS OF SERVICE TO FIREFIGHTING

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, on Saturday, February 8, 1997, the community of West Point, KY held its annual Volunteer Fire Department and EMS Appreciation Banquet. Each year, this banquet honors and celebrates those in the community who have been instrumental in supporting the mission of the volunteer fire department and EMS services. This year, the community honored one man, Ralph W. Wright, who has given 50 years of his life to the safety of the citizens of West Point.

Mr. Wright has been a member of the fire department for the last 50 years. He began as a firefighter and worked his way up through the ranks to chief, a position he held for 27 years. After a long and distinguished career in the fire department, Mr. Wright did not let retirement prevent him from fighting fires. In fact, in his retirement, Mr. Wright continues to serve as a firefighter—who still makes the first truck out of the station. In addition, to his service as a firefighter, he was a volunteer EMT on the ambulance service for several years.

Because of his tireless efforts on behalf of the citizens of West Point, today's volunteer fire department is what it is today: dedicated to the safety of all its citizens; prepared to battle fires and hazardous material spills; responding to protect the community from floods and other natural disasters.

In addition to his work on behalf of the safety of the citizens of West Point, Mr. Wright has been a strong and active supporter of the Crusade for Children. The citizens of West Point have been well served by Ralph Wright. He is an outstanding citizen and a shining example to all. I know that the community of West Point holds Ralph Wright in the highest of esteem. This is an honor that is long overdue and I am delighted to share this event with my colleagues. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Ralph Wright and to his family on this special occasion.

HONORING THE WILLIAMS ON THEIR 50TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, families are the cornerstone of America. The data are undeniable: Individuals from strong families contribute to the society. In an era when nearly half of all couples married today will see their union dissolve into divorce, I believe it is both instructive and important to honor those who have taken the commitment of "till death us do part" seriously, demonstrating successfully the timeless principles of love, honor, and fidelity. These characteristics make our country strong.

For these important reasons, I rise today to honor Wade and Flo Williams of Springfield, MO who on February 10, 1997, will celebrate their 50th wedding