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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m., and was called to order by the Honorable CHUCK HAGEL, a Senator from the State of Nebraska.

PRAYER

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

Righteous God, in whom we discover what is right and receive the courage to do it, we seek to be a nation distinguished because of righteousness. Today, as we celebrate the birthday of Abraham Lincoln, our 16th President, we remember his memorable response to someone who expressed the hope that You, Lord, were on their side. Lincoln said, "I am not at all concerned about that, for I know that the Lord is always on the side of the right. But it is my constant anxiety and prayer that I—and this Nation—should be on the Lord's side."

We echo that prayer today. Help us to think of prayer not to convince You of our plans, but to gain clarity about Your plans for us. We renew our commitment to seek Your will for the decisions we must make. Bless the Senators today as they discern what is right and take their place together on Your side. In the name of our Lord and Savior. Amen.

APPOINTMENT OF THE ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read a communication to the Senate.

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, February 12, 1997.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, section 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable CHUCK HAGEL, a Senator from the State of Nebraska, to perform the duties of Chair.

STROM THURMOND,
President pro tempore.

Mr. HAGEL thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The acting majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, on behalf of the majority leader, I will state the schedule of today's session.

This morning, there will be a period of morning business until the hour of 11 a.m. At 11 a.m. the Senate will resume consideration of Senate Joint Resolution 1, the constitutional amendment requiring a balanced budget. Under the order, Senator BYRD will be recognized immediately to make a statement regarding the resolution. At the hour of 1:30 today, under a previous consent order, the Senate will resume debate on the pending amendment relating to national security, which was offered by Senator DODD. Debate on that amendment will be equally divided until 5:30 today, at which time the Senate will proceed to a vote on or in relation to Senator Dodd's amendment.

Once again, all Senators can expect a rollcall vote at approximately 5:30 today. Additional votes can be expected during today's session on any further amendments that may be ordered to Senate Joint Resolution 1, or, perhaps, on any available nominations, as well as on one or two Senate resolutions, which we are attempting to clear for consideration.

I thank my colleagues for their attention.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 11 a.m. The time between 9:30 and 10 a.m. shall be equally divided, with 15 minutes under the control of the Senator from Missouri [Mr. ASHCROFT] and 15 minutes under the control of the Senator from North Dakota [Mr. DORGAN].

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I understand those Senators will be on the floor in a few moments.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mr. ASHCROFT and Mr. DORGAN pertaining to the introduction of S. 304 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

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

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. D'AMATO. Mr. President, I ask that I may be permitted to proceed as in morning business.

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

(The remarks of Mr. D'AMATO pertaining to the introduction of S. 305 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

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



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Mr. FORD. Mr. President, I understand we have about 4 minutes left on Leader DASCHLE's time. I ask unanimous consent I be allowed to use that time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator may proceed.

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. FORD pertaining to the introduction of S. 306 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time between 10:30 and 11 a.m. shall be under the control of the Senator from Wyoming [Mr. THOMAS] or his designee.

Mr. COVERDELL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, as I understand it, the 30 minutes between 10:30 and 11 are under the control of Senator THOMAS from Wyoming. I am going to ask, in his place, that we yield up to 10 minutes to the Senator from Minnesota.

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

The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

OUR CHILDREN AND THE BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I want to talk a little bit this morning about the balanced budget amendment and really how important it is to our children, our grandchildren, and really to the future of this country.

As a nation, we find ourselves at a very critical juncture. The choices we face today are stark: It is either stagnation or growth, poverty or prosperity, hope or hopelessness for our Nation's children. Throughout the history of this world, great nations have risen and great nations have fallen. Many have perished simply as a result of one fatal fiscal miscalculation at a critical time—a time at which we find ourselves today.

We must move forward because we have a moral obligation to pave a trail and to light the way. Yet, a single misstep as we enter into the 21st century could cast our children off the path and into darkness.

Now, despite the improvement of our short-term fiscal outlook in the past decade, we face great danger from the fiscal imbalances ahead that swing over us like a sword dangling from a thread. Without a balanced budget amendment to address these risks, I am afraid that the national debt will destroy this Nation.

The debt today stands at over \$5.3 trillion, and the cumulative damage of the national debt to the economy over the past 40 years has been enormous. Our Nation has fallen from its perch as the world's greatest creditor to become the world's greatest debtor Nation in history.

A child born today enters the world already \$20,000 in debt and faces an additional \$1,300 every year just to pay the interest on that debt.

By the year 2007, the national debt will rise to \$8.5 trillion, and children born then will inherit a share of nearly \$30,000. That is \$30,000, whether poor, middle-class, or well off. Every child in every household in this land is affected.

Now, as historian John Steele Gordon writes in his new book, "Hamilton's Blessing: The Extraordinary Life and Times of Our National Debt," the size of the debt itself is not the problem—it is the fact that we have run it up to such extraordinary levels without justification.

Gordon's research shows that in the first 184 years of our independence, the Nation borrowed a total of \$300 billion to fight the wars that made and preserved our Nation. But he goes on to say that, in the last 36 years, we have taken on more than 17 times as much new debt—at first, in an attempt to maximize economic output, but in recent years, as he explains, no good reason whatsoever has been the cause behind this.

Mr. President, the imbalance between the Government's entitlement promises and the funds it will have available to pay for them will alone bankrupt this Nation.

Now, the Bipartisan Commission on Entitlement and Tax Reform has warned us that in the year 2012, projected outlays for entitlements and interest on the national debt will at that time consume all tax revenues collected by the Federal Government. In 2030, projected spending for Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and Federal employee retirement programs alone will consume all of our tax revenues, leaving nothing to educate our kids, to keep their streets safe, to cure their diseases, or to protect the environment.

Shortsighted politicians repeatedly refuse to make tough choices, and the knowledge that we have no clear public policy to address this imbalance darkens our future even more.

Although the solutions to our problems are anything but simple, we must not shy away from them any longer. The balanced budget amendment will force Congress and the administration to work together to defuse this time bomb. Without it, the deficit spending will continue, and that is despite all the rhetoric from both Congress and the White House to the contrary.

Even if we indeed balance the budget through a statutory requirement, we all know that this is not a guarantee that our budgets will balance in the future. Our national debt will take several generations to eliminate now. We not only need the will to balance the budget, but we also need the means to follow through, to keep the budget balanced, and to begin to return the borrowed money. We need the balanced budget amendment. Talking about the

protection of our children, without addressing the long-term risks that are poised to imprison them is corrupt.

Mr. President, I have heard my colleagues many times on the other side of the aisle this week raise the word children as if it were a protective shield. "We can't enact the balanced budget amendment," they say, "the education of our children will suffer." "We can't enact the balanced budget amendment, the nutritional health of our children is at stake." "We can't enact a balanced budget amendment, our children's medical needs will go unserved."

They have also used the phrase that we have attacked children because they are the path of least resistance. Well, we know the work that we undertake every day in this Chamber has a profound effect on every American child, just as it affects every taxpayer, every working family, and every senior citizen. I am certain there is not a single Senator in this Chamber who would deny a child a good education, deny a child a hot meal, or deny a doctor's tender care.

Yet, through our own greed, we have denied that very same child a future free of a debt that they did not incur and which they do not deserve to bear.

Now, I ask you this, Mr. President: Who was protecting our children while Congress amassed a debt of \$5.3 trillion? Those children were not here to be able to say don't do that. We took the path of least political resistance when we put our children into debt. They did not have a voice on this Senate floor to stop us from doing that.

Who stood up for America's children while Congress signed their names to a mortgage that they will never be able to escape?

Who came to the floor of this Chamber crying out for the children when we sacrificed their financial security for another piece of pork, or another Federal program?

I will tell you this, Mr. President. The same Senators who today raise the shield of children as their argument against the balanced budget amendment were nowhere to be found when America's children needed them most.

Only the balanced budget amendment will protect our children from the suffocating excess of a Congress free to spend dollars that it does not have.

So, Mr. President, the legal authority of the balanced budget amendment will ensure that we do not drown our children in a sea of debt. The moral authority of a higher power demands that we do nothing less.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the remainder of my time.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I commend the Senator from Minnesota for his remarks on behalf of the balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. I think he makes a very poignant statement when he alludes to the condition of our children in the future. I have always enjoyed reading Thomas Jefferson's admonitions about