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No. 24

House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Monday, March 3, 1997, at 2 p.m.

Senate

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1997

The Senate met at 10 a.m., and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

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

Gracious God, our Father, You have placed within us the desire to seek You, the patience to wait for You, the understanding to know You, and the willingness to do Your will. To turn away from You is to fall; to return to You is to rise again. To trust in You is to abide secure; to do our work with excellence is to glorify You.

Today, increase our comprehension of Your goodness and grace. Make us aware of Your presence, in all things, responsive to Your guidance, and grateful for all Your blessings. Control the thoughts of our minds, the truth and tenor of the words we speak, and the attitudes we communicate.

Bless the Senators and the work that they do this day. Bless them with productivity and progress for Your glory. Through our Lord and Savior. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, today the Senate will be in session for a period of morning business. There will be no rollcall votes conducted during today's session, and when the Senate completes its business today, it will convene then, again, on Monday, March 3,

with no rollcall votes occurring during Monday's session.

In accordance with the agreement reached last night, on Tuesday, the Senate will vote on Senate Joint Resolution 1, the constitutional amendment for a balanced budget, at 5:15 p.m. I remind my colleagues that there will be rollcall votes conducted throughout next week. We anticipate taking up a couple of nominations, including the nomination to be the U.S. Trade Representative, next week. We will give the exact times that we expect action on that to occur, and the time agreements, when we come in on Monday or Tuesday morning. But the next rollcall vote will be conducted on Tuesday at 5:15. I thank my colleagues for their attention.

I am pleased to see the distinguished Senator from Nebraska here ready to speak. I am looking forward to hearing his remarks.

I yield the floor, Mr. President.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 378

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read a bill for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 378) to provide additional funding for the Committee on Governmental Affairs of the Senate.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I object to further consideration of this bill at this time.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The bill will be placed on the calendar.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senate is now in morning business.

The Senator from Nebraska is recognized.

UPGRADING MILITARY HOUSING

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, I rise today to address a very important issue for our Nation's men and women in uniform, an issue that you and I have spoken about.

A recent article in the Omaha World Herald detailed problems that Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska, headquarters for the Strategic Command, is having with the condition of military housing on that base. I would like to read just a few paragraphs from this story. This is a story all too familiar, Mr. President, especially to you as our distinguished leader in the Armed Services Committee. This is a quote from the Omaha World Herald story:

Staff Sgt. Tony Suprenant and his wife, Karen, never thought that life in the United States Air Force meant they would get a palatial estate to call home. But the cramped and drafty townhouse that was offered to them when they arrived at Offutt Air Force Base last year was more of a sacrifice than they were willing to make.

The two-bedroom home was so small that it would not hold the modest amount of furniture they had gathered during their 7 years together on five bases. Offutt officials eventually found a more spacious and recently refurbished three-bedroom home for the couple and their 2-year-old daughter, Emily. Not every family at that base is so lucky.

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



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Many of the 2,600 Offutt families who live in base housing must cope with cramped conditions and an array of maintenance headaches—frozen pipes, leaky basements, difficulty in heating and cooling—that have only increased with time and heavy use.

Sadly, Mr. President, this is a problem that extends across the country and throughout all branches of our military throughout the world. It is a problem that we are not addressing as a nation, as a Congress. This is shameful. Like America's strength, our military strength is its people—the men and women and their families who have committed their lives to protecting the freedoms of this country.

The Pentagon has estimated that they have problems with a majority of its 350,000 military housing units all over the world. In the Omaha World Herald article, Pete Potochney, who works in the Pentagon office overseeing military housing, is quoted as saying:

We would consider a lot of our houses as being unsuitable.

The Pentagon is devoting \$680 million in the 1998 budget proposal to fix these houses. However, at that rate of spending, it will take the Pentagon more than 30 years to fix all of the housing that need fixing.

Mr. President, the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States should not have to wait 30 years for adequate housing for their families. At the rate we are currently making progress, it is a rate that is being made on this issue far too slowly, and most, if not all, of our current military personnel will never live in decent housing at this rate.

The Clinton administration has repeatedly proposed budget cuts and more budget cuts for our Nation's defense and our military. The President's national defense budget request for fiscal year 1998 is \$2.9 billion less in budget authority than the level in the congressional budget resolution and \$3.6 billion less in outlays. Moreover, the President's budget proposes a decrease of 16 percent for military construction in housing for our families.

Military officials estimate they have problems with a majority of our military housing units, and yet the President has suggested reducing the funding for this program by 16 percent. He also proposes a decrease in the military personnel account.

Where is the commitment in this budget to the men and women who wear our Nation's uniform? These men and women may be asked to put their lives on the line at any time, and yet we offer them inadequate housing and pay below the poverty line.

This is wrong, Mr. President. This is very wrong. We are not taking care of our people in the military. If we do not reverse this trend, our national security will suffer.

This is a readiness issue, just as it is a quality-of-life issue. Our troops are being deployed for longer periods of time, with more time away from their

families and for more missions. We are asking more and more from our service men and women and their families.

I ask my colleagues to place themselves in the position of a young enlisted person stationed halfway around the globe. How can this young man concentrate on his critically important national defense job if he is worried about his wife having to deal with broken pipes or his children living in a cold, damp home? Our service men and women are often placed in tense situations in charge of multimillion-dollar pieces of highly technical military equipment. We only help to distract them from their duties of national defense if we do not assure them that their families are being taken care of and their families are living in decent housing.

I truly fear the long-term consequences of the lack of attention and funding devoted to maintaining adequate housing for our Nation's military. I fear many bright young men and women will opt not to enter the military when they see the lack of resources devoted to meeting their basic family needs.

The military today is much different than it was when I served nearly 30 years ago. Today, most members of the military are married with families. They all volunteer to serve this country. They volunteer for many reasons. They do not expect to be treated in any special way, but they should have the right to expect decent housing for their families.

Today's military is a high-technology military, Mr. President. It needs to be capable of responding rapidly to a variety of situations throughout the world. We need our best and our brightest young men and women to serve. But we will not attract or retain them if we are unwilling to invest in them and their families.

Mr. President, I intend to be very vocal on this issue. I have already spoken to the distinguished chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee this morning about this issue. We must begin placing a higher priority in the defense budget on taking care of our people. These are the people who protect America's freedoms. Freedom is not free.

In fact, we need to place a higher priority for total defense spending in the overall budget. In many ways we live in a world today of greater uncertainty and danger than the one we have known for the last 50 years. If we expect our military to respond to all these challenges, if we expect our service men and women to risk their lives defending America, and America's interests, then we must match those expectations with appropriate funding for an acceptable standard of living for them.

The foundation of our military is the men and women who serve. That is the very foundation of our society—our people, our families. Our military is no different. Our military is the guarantor

of American foreign policy and the protector of all our freedoms. Just as a house built on sand will soon crumble, our military might cannot stand strong without committed good men and women.

If we are unwilling to invest in these men and women we will pay a heavy price, a very heavy price, a price far greater than budgetary numbers.

Mr. President, I have written to the distinguished chairman and ranking member of the Armed Services Committee today, as well as our former colleague, the distinguished Defense Secretary, Bill Cohen, on this issue. I intend to be very involved working with my colleagues on this matter.

Let us do the right thing. Let us do the right thing for our people. Let us find ways to fix this problem. We owe it to the men and women who proudly wear the uniform of the U.S. military.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that those letters and the article I mentioned from the Omaha World-Herald be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, February 28, 1997.

Hon. WILLIAM COHEN,
Secretary of Defense, the Pentagon,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: America's men and women in uniform need decent housing. I am asking for your firm commitment to make that happen.

In missions around the world, our armed forces protect America's freedom. But at bases across America, these same dedicated people too often must live in substandard housing that is simply unacceptable. I am deeply concerned about the long-term consequences that poor living conditions will have for our ability to maintain a strong, all-volunteer force.

This problem has hit home for me at Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska, where at least 500 housing units built in the 1950s and 1960s need to be replaced. Far too much base housing has cracked foundations, cramped conditions, leaky basements, heating and cooling problems, and gaps around the windows. The housing problems at Offutt were described in the enclosed Omaha World-Herald article from February 19, 1997.

The administration has talked about the importance of military housing. But, frankly, I am disappointed in the follow-through. While our housing problems are growing worse, the President has proposed a decrease of 16 percent for military construction and family housing. The President's housing request is substantially less—by about \$3 billion—than levels set forth in the budget resolution passed last year. At this rate, it would take 30 years to replace all the substandard housing on our military bases—and after 30 years of wear and tear on houses built today, we would need to start replacing them all over again!

It's time we get ahead of this problem and make a real commitment—in money as well as words—to providing adequate housing for our military personnel. I spoke about this matter today on the Senate floor and am enclosing a copy of my remarks.

I am ready to work with you in this effort. Please let me know what you plan to do and how I can help.

Sincerely,

CHUCK HAGEL,
U.S. Senator.

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, February 28, 1997.

Hon. STROM THURMOND,
Chairman, Committee On Armed Services,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: America's men and women in uniform need decent housing. I am asking you to make this a top priority for the Armed Services Committee this year.

In missions around the world, our armed forces protect America's freedom. But on bases around the world, these same dedicated people too often must live in substandard housing that is simply unacceptable. I am deeply concerned about the long-term consequences that poor living conditions will have for our ability to maintain a strong, all-volunteer force.

This problem has hit home for me at Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska, where at least 500 housing units built in the 1950s and 1960s need to be replaced. Far too much base housing has cracked foundations, cramped conditions, leaky basements, heating and cooling problems, and gaps around the windows. The housing problems at Offutt were described in the enclosed Omaha World-Herald article from February 19, 1997.

We need much more than just talk about this subject, but the President's budget request is moving in exactly the wrong direction. While our housing problems are growing worse, the President has proposed a decrease of 16 percent for military construction and family housing. The President's housing request is substantially less—by about \$3 billion—than levels set forth in the budget resolution passed last year. At this rate, it would take 30 years to replace all the substandard housing on our military bases—and after 30 years of wear and tear on houses built today, we would need to start replacing them all over again!

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Sincerely,

CHUCK HAGEL,
U.S. Senator.

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, February 28, 1997.

Hon. CARL LEVIN,
Ranking Minority Member, Committee On
Armed Services, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR LEVIN: America's men and women in uniform need decent housing. I am asking you to make this a top priority for the Armed Services Committee this year.

In missions around the world, our armed forces protect America's freedom. But on bases around the world, these same dedicated people too often must live in substandard housing that is simply unacceptable. I am deeply concerned about the long-term consequences that poor living conditions will have for our ability to maintain a strong, all-volunteer force.

This problem has hit home for me at Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska, where at least 500 housing units built in the 1950s and 1960s need to be replaced. Far too much base housing has cracked foundations, cramped conditions, leaky basements, heating and cooling problems, and gaps around the windows. The housing problems at Offutt were described in the enclosed Omaha World-Herald article from February 19, 1997.

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I am ready to work with you in this effort. Please let me know what you plan to do and how I can help.

Sincerely,

CHUCK HAGEL,
U.S. Senator.

[From the Omaha World-Herald, Feb. 19,
1997]

OFFUTT FAMILIES STRUGGLE WITH HOUSING (By Jason Gertzen)

Staff Sgt. Tony Surprenant and his wife, Karen, never thought that life in the Air Force meant they would get a palatial estate to call home. But the cramped and drafty town house that was offered to them when they arrived at Offutt Air Force Base last year was more of a sacrifice than they were willing to make.

The two-bedroom home was so small that it could not hold even the modest amount of furniture they had gathered during their seven years together on five different bases.

Offutt officials eventually found a more spacious and recently refurbished three-bedroom town house for the couple and their 2-year-old daughter, Emily.

Not every family at the base is so lucky.

Many of the 2,600 Offutt families who live in base housing must cope with cramped conditions and an array of maintenance headaches—frozen pipes, leaky basements, difficulty in heating and cooling—that have only increased with time and heavy use.

Base officials say that at least 500 of the units, built in the 1950s and 1960s, should be replaced. They have proposed a \$46 million construction project that would begin in a few years.

Military bases across the nation are managing family housing that offers few modern amenities and is increasingly expensive to maintain. The issue is critical to the military because comfortable and affordable housing is a key benefit in attracting the highest-quality troops to today's all-volunteer military.

Amenities or not the Offutt family housing, which is free, remains in high demand, particularly for lower-paid troops who find it hard to obtain better private housing at prices they can afford. Offutt has more than 400 families on a waiting list for base housing.

"Quite honestly, we are not taking care of our people," said Sen. Chuck Hagel, R-Neb.

Hagel, an Army veteran, former Veterans Administration official and vocal advocate for veterans and service members, decried the lack of attention and money devoted in recent years to improving housing for soldiers and their families. He said he would push for more money during this year's budget debate.

Pentagon officials know they have a problem with the bulk of the 350,000 homes for military families.

"We would consider a lot of our houses as being unsuitable," said Pete Potochney, who works in the Pentagon office that oversees military housing issues.

Replacing or refurbishing all of the houses in need of significant repair or updating would cost at least \$20 billion. Potochney said. At the rate the Pentagon has been addressing the problem—the 1998 budget proposal would devote \$680 million to the initiative—it would take 30 years to fix all of the military family houses in need of work.

A lack of space is a common complaint from Offutt families. The living rooms in some of the units are not big enough for a modest arrangement of a sofa, love seat, coffee table and cabinets for a stereo and television.

Many of the 2,600 town houses for military families at Offutt also have problems ranging from cracked foundations that have made them structurally unsafe to units with little or no insulation, which makes them difficult to heat and often leads to frozen water pipes.

No one is living in a unit that is considered unsafe, Offutt officials said. The handful of buildings in such condition have been razed or are closed and scheduled for demolition.

But the units that are in use lack amenities or have problems that draw a steady stream of complaints.

Residents in the oldest family housing buildings at Offutt, the Wherry area, said they must run heaters all day and night during the winter just to keep temperatures in the high 60s. Many windows are so dilapidated that they fail to block breezes strong enough to steadily blow curtains.

Water frequently seeps into basement storage areas.

The base has tried to improve conditions. At least 100 units have been remodeled and sometimes enlarged. Wooden kitchen cabinets have replaced metal ones, and bathrooms have been updated.

Base officials plan to continue renovating more homes each year.

This is in addition to the \$2.4 million spent each year on an "active and aggressive" maintenance program that addresses the most serious problems said Col. John Mollison, commander of the 55th Support Group.

The units regularly receive fresh coats of paint and other attention that make them as nice as possible without investing the money needed for longer-term improvements said Mollison, who oversees the base's housing complexes.

"We fix the things that break," Mollison said. "Everything is cleaned."

The Wherry housing area was built in the 1950s. The Capehart housing area which has 2,000 single-family and multi-plex units about two miles west of the base was built in the 1960s. The units are typical of private homes and apartments built at the time, Mollison said.

"As we have seen houses change over the years, they have tended to get larger and include more creature comforts," Mollison said.

When residents complain about the housing, Offutt officials plead for patience, saying that the continuing remodeling efforts and the construction plans will improve the homes eventually.

About 40 percent of Offutt's 6,200 families live in the homes that the military provides. The base has dormitories for single military members who live on base.

The remaining military members at Offutt own or rent private housing off the base. These people receive a housing allowance that covers about 80 percent of their rent or mortgage costs and utilities.

Those who live in base housing do not receive a housing allowance, but they pay nothing for rent or utilities. This can mean an extra \$2,000 to \$3,000 in disposable income each year according to a recent military housing study.

The money makes a lot of people willing to cope with cramped conditions and other problems. Finding private housing at prices they can afford can be difficult for lower-paid soldiers and airmen.

Recent studies, including one done for Offutt late last year, indicated a shortage of rental housing in the area, especially for lower-income residents.

Surprenant, who joined the Air Force in 1987, said housing is an important benefit that makes a military career more attractive.

The money saved by living in military housing allows Mrs. Surprenant to stay at home with Emily. "We think parents should stay home with their kids if they can," Surprenant said.

The Surprenants said they also have found that there are more than just financial benefits to living in base housing.

"In a military community, right away you have something in common with your neighbors," Surprenant said.

Mr. HAGEL. Thank you, Mr. President. I yield my time.

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

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

A CALL TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I call on the American people to use this weekend and Monday to express their views to the Members of the U.S. Senate on whether or not we should have a balanced budget. The American people can influence the vote that we will take next Tuesday at 5:15 p.m. The American people overwhelmingly support a constitutional amendment for a balanced budget because they know, they understand, without this guarantee, without this leverage, it will not happen. So the decision we make next Tuesday is in the hands of the American people. They need to let their Senators know how they feel. If their Senators have said they will be for it, commend them for it. If they have said they are going to vote against it, ask them why. Ask them what is the alternative. Ask them, where is the historical proof that a balanced budget will occur without the constitutional amendment.

If a Senator has switched his vote from a year ago or 2 years ago, or if a Senator has switched his vote from what he said he would do in last year's elections, ask them why. How can you do that? How can you, in 6 months, change your mind on so fundamental an issue?

Mr. President, this is a question of honesty. It is a question of truth in Government. We wonder why people are cynical, why they wonder about us, why they question us. This is exhibit A. When you give your word to your

constituency in your State during the election campaign that you are going to vote for a constitutional amendment for a balanced budget and then 6 months later you say, "Gee whiz, I have learned something new, it is hard to take." These are not new members to government and politics. These are people with experience at the State level, at the Federal level, in the House of Representatives. What is new?

No, this is a question of basic honesty. But the American people can make that difference. If they will get on the phone, if they will call, if they will write, if they will express themselves, they can make sure that this amendment passes next Tuesday.

The press, the Washington press, is saying it is over, they will not get but 66 votes. The fat lady has not sung. This "ain't" over. It is not over until we take the vote. I would hate to be a Senator who votes next Tuesday against this constitutional amendment for a balanced budget, especially if I had said earlier that I was going to do something else.

I am still working on a couple of angles, too. I have been working with the rules of the Congress for 24 years, and I tell my colleagues you are never going to be absolutely sure what I am going to do. If I can find a way to do what I think is right for the American people, I will do it, and I will be innovative. I have a couple of ideas. Believe me, there are a couple of Senators in this Chamber who are sweating right now. I bet they will not be doing any press conferences this weekend. No. That is an age-old strategy when you are in Congress. If you do not want to talk about something you are fixing to do that your constituents do not agree with, you hide. Press availability is not possible. We need to do this.

Now, the argument is made by the President, "Oh, we should just go ahead and balance the budget." I agree. We should have done it last year. The Congress passed a balanced budget. The President vetoed it, just 1 year ago. Why did we not do it the year before, the year before, or the year before? Why haven't we done it for 28 years? Who among us believes we will do it in 2 more years or 4 more years?

I am an optimist. I believe in the positive attitude of men like Ronald Reagan—there is a pony in there somewhere. We will find a way to do this job. But I have not seen any evidence of it yet. I have done my dead-level best to calm down the rhetoric and try to be positive and hold out hope and hold out an olive branch to Members of the Congress on both sides of the aisle and between the two Chambers and with the President. I have said we should work together for the American people. We should get this job done, balance the budget.

Mr. President, you have just been reelected. We have a majority in the Congress. The American people want us to do some things for our children and for the future of our country. I have said

we can do that. We should do that. The President suggested early on in one of our discussions that we should set up a commission for a particular matter—which I will not talk about now—and I said, "You know, Mr. President, you just got reelected, we just got reelected. That is what we are for. We should do the job."

We don't need a commission. Why do we always have to have this deal where we punt it off to commissions where we can see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil. They did it, not us. So let's see what we can do, and then maybe we will talk about a commission.

I said, "Mr. President, please, please, show leadership and show some courage in your budget. Show me that we can do it." And then he sent us his budget. We didn't trash it, cuss it, and throw it out into the street and say it's dead on arrival. We weren't, obviously, happy with it. I took over a day before I had much of anything to say. I actually read it and looked at the numbers, and I called him and I said, "Mr. President, this is not what I hoped for. It is political cover." I understand. We have made it clear that we weren't going to go through the exercise we went through last year. He was afraid, maybe, to take political risks in sending up a budget that really would get us where we needed to go. He felt like, well, we will negotiate a real result. But you can't have shell games and remove home health care from one part of Medicare over to the other, and say, gee, I just magically saved \$50 billion. You can't have triggers and lookbacks and optimistic assumptions and shove all the tough decisions off on the next President. Two-thirds of what would be saved would occur after the year 2000. No, it wasn't adequate, and I expressed my concern about it. But I continue to say that, well, okay, I understand how that can happen.

I am prepared to do my dead-level best to work with the Congress and with the American people and the President to get a balanced budget agreement this year. But I am not going to be a part of a fraud and hold hands with the President, or anybody else, and say, this is it, we got it done, unless it is real. So I think it puts additional pressure on us to have the constitutional amendment. I have been here all these years, in the House and in the Senate, and we have tried. Good men and women have said, yes, we can do this. Jimmy Carter said it; he meant to do it. Ronald Reagan said it; he intended to do it. Congress has said we are going to do it. We had the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings act to force us to do it with a sequestration, but it was a statute. It was only a statute. Guess what happened. One by one, we removed all the hurdles, all the requirements that would have actually gotten us to a balanced budget.

First, we said, oh, gee, we can't have it apply to this or to that program. I remember the negotiations. I was there. We said maybe not this program,