

opposite effect that was desired in the first place.

The process is a burden to participants if you have between now and this month of March to sign up. Just think, that has to go to the local level, whenever you make those arrangements, that application for CRP. It goes from the local board to the State board to the Federal board before it is approved back to the farmer. The farmer does not know what he will be planting or harvesting this year.

It could be June or July. In fact, the president of the National Association of Wheat Growers, Philip McClain, testified before the House Forestry Resource and Conservation and Research Subcommittee and expressed his concern that the USDA will not decide which offers being made by the growers during that March CRP signup will be accepted into most areas until June. Now, if it is July in our country—in other words, the winter wheat people are really put at a disadvantage if you are in the southern climes. In the northern climes, it is too late to plant a spring crop. The delayed signup really puts a hardship on wheat growers, no matter in which part of the country you farm—whether it's Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, or going on north to the Canadian border.

So the National Association of Wheat Growers, all at once over the weekend, has said, wait a minute here, we need immediate congressional action, maybe to recommend that we extend the present contracts, which expire this fall and which qualify for participation under the current eligibility criteria. I think that is a good recommendation. Even the USDA State staff feels that the problems that are associated with this program make a mockery of the intent of the program. It does not provide the original intent of why CRP was put in in the first place.

So I recommend to the Department of Agriculture—and they have time, I think, to look at this, and, if not, I think Congress should take a very serious look at it, because it is just not fair if you have a program that will work exactly the opposite from what was intended and put all the grain producers at a disadvantage. I suggest that the Secretary extend the current program for 1 year. Let's give it some time and take a look at it and try to get the desired results and rewrite the rules to reflect the intent of the program. The intent of the program was to take marginal land out of production so that we can manage watershed, we can manage soil erosion, we can manage wetlands, potholes, all of the environmental concerns that this country has. We can take a look at this, given more time to do it. Of course, these recommendations are supported by the National Association of Wheat Growers.

So with this in mind, with the good record of CRP, a program that has been highly successful in doing two things

that were most desired in rural America, I think it is only right to extend those rules through the program this year. Let's look at it, and this time we might be able to get it right. Right now, we are extending some programs that would suggest exactly the opposite.

#### TAX RELIEF

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, today there will be legislation that will be introduced in the Congress having to do with estate taxes. I know estate taxes and capital gains are viewed by many as tax relief for the rich. Last week, a week ago today, I was watching a television program and there was a financial organization, or a mutual fund, who had declared that they had been so successful that they have to declare a capital gain. The people who had investments in that mutual fund would be assessed a tax because of those capital gains. I didn't see one rich man in that line that came down to complain about that. So it is not just that.

If you are really concerned about keeping farmers on the land and letting young farmers get started, we have to start taking a look at capital gains, because I think we have to lower the average age of the farmers today, and also estate taxes, so that we can pass these farms and ranches and small businesses on to the next generation.

Mr. President, I see my time has expired. I yield the floor.

Mr. GRAMS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota [Mr. GRAMS], is recognized.

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be able to speak for 10 minutes.

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

#### THE AMERICAN TAXPAYERS DESERVE A BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I rise today to again express my strong support for the balanced budget amendment.

I want to thank the distinguished chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee for providing a forum which has encouraged debate on all sides of this critically important issue. The public has been well served by these many hours of discussion.

Mr. President, let me describe the need for the balanced budget amendment by comparing it to a situation to which many Americans can relate.

By repeated abuse of a high-interest credit card, your debt is rapidly mounting until you reach the point of maxing out. You're barely paying enough to cover the minimum monthly payments—let alone make any dent in the principal—and your debts threaten to consume the entire family budget.

With every available dollar being funneled into your credit card pay-

ments, there is no money left over to meet your daily needs or invest in your family's future.

You, the overextended consumer, are left with only two viable options: Either file for bankruptcy or drastically cut your spending.

If you're so far in debt that you see nothing in your future but despair, you may seek out the help of a credit counseling service. I guarantee they'll take one look at the horrendous mess you've created and demand you come up with an immediate plan for climbing out of debt.

They'll tell you there are only three options that will return you to financial solvency: Discipline, discipline, and discipline.

Now imagine that scenario multiplied several trillion times, where the reckless consumer is not an individual but the Federal Government itself. That's very much the predicament the United States will soon face.

As Washington continues to spend dollars it does not have, each annual budget deficit is added to the balance of the overall national debt.

The national debt today stands at \$5.3 trillion, or \$20,000 for every American man, woman, and child.

The debt is increasing by \$721 million every day, and \$1 in every \$7 Federal tax goes to service just the interest on a debt so massive.

If an individual acted with equal irresponsibility, the consequences would be severe.

The Federal Government, however, simply writes another IOU in the name of our children and grandchildren and keeps right on spending, demanding services today that it wants our kids to pay for tomorrow.

In recent years, the credit counselors—in this case, the American taxpayers—have been scrutinizing Federal spending and demanding that the Government be accountable for every tax dollar.

But instead of hearing "discipline, discipline, discipline," Washington somehow hears it as "spend, spend, spend." And spend it does—even when every ounce of common sense demands that it should not.

Despite all the recent talk about controlling Federal spending, there is no reason to believe Washington has fundamentally changed its ways.

Without the constitutional protections of a balanced budget amendment, the outlook for our fiscal future is grim: The national debt will continue to explode, America will eventually run out of IOU's, and a bankrupt nation will surely follow.

For an entire generation—more than three decades—Washington has talked about eliminating the deficit. "[My program] is the surest and soundest way of achieving in time a balanced budget," said President John F. Kennedy in his State of the Union Address in 1963.

That sentiment has been echoed by every President since Johnson, Nixon,

Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton.

The fact that we haven't balanced the budget since 1969 demonstrates that talking about balancing the budget is far easier than actually doing it.

Many budget balancing plans have been proposed over the years, yet even the most well-intentioned of them have not brought about balance, just larger deficits.

The pervasive growth of government makes it painfully obvious that in a government where politicians exhibit compassion by spending other people's money, we cannot be assured our budgets will ever balance without the moral authority of the Constitution to enforce it.

The latest budget proposal from the White House illustrates the real need for a balanced budget amendment.

Although President Clinton's plan is billed as being balanced, it really isn't—the deficit would increase next year and early reports from the Congressional Budget Office say the Clinton plan would remain about \$80 billion short of balance in 2002. Seventy-five percent of the President's deficit reduction would not occur until after the year 2000, meaning the Clinton administration will never have to make the tough choices it will take to eliminate the deficit. In other words, talk about it but leave it up to somebody else to do it. And most disturbing, instead of cutting spending and asking Washington to sacrifice, the President's budget raises taxes by \$76 billion and asks, once again, that the taxpayers step forward and sacrifice. I can think of no more compelling justification for enacting the balanced budget amendment.

Despite guarded optimism in Washington about reaching agreement this year to balance the budget, surveys show most Americans do not believe the deficit will be eliminated by the target date of 2002. They realize that all the laws, goals, plans, and pledges may not be strong enough to hold back the tide of rising deficits.

Even if the budget were to be balanced in 2002, there is nothing to stop a future, less-vigilant Congress from picking up where the big spenders left off. The constitutional protections guaranteed by the balanced budget amendment remain our best hope of enforcing future fiscal restraint.

Mr. President, I am greatly disappointed by the efforts of some of our colleagues who have chosen to use Social Security as a shield to disguise their opposition to the balanced budget amendment. Most of us have come to the conclusion this is nothing more than a transparent political ploy to defeat the amendment, while playing to the fears of senior citizens by demagoguing the Social Security issue.

I have absolutely no doubt that if the Social Security concerns were erased today, another problem with the amendment would crop up tomorrow, and we would once again find ourselves

in the position of being a single vote short of passage. This is already evident through the lineup of amendments we have been considering the last few weeks.

I wonder if my colleagues are aware of the massive tax increase the American people would be forced to accept if we did indeed factor Social Security surpluses out of the budget process.

Between 2002 and 2007 alone, the tax hike required to bring the budget into balance would amount to \$706 billion. Yes, \$706 billion.—That dwarfs the record-breaking \$265 billion tax increase President Clinton ushered through Congress in 1993.

As their share, taxpayers in my home State of Minnesota could face a total Federal tax hike of about \$12 billion. That is an average household tax increase of \$1,085 per year. And again, that is just from 2002 to 2007.

Mr. President, Social Security is facing serious problems, and reforms are needed to ensure that retirement benefits will continue to be available to all Americans. But taking Social Security off budget does nothing to help the trust fund remain solvent.

We all know that, by law, any Social Security surpluses must be invested in Treasury securities. Without serious reform, as long as the Government is allowed to grow and to continue its deficit-spending ways, it will still borrow from the trust fund, leaving nothing but IOUs to future beneficiaries.

Therefore, first and foremost, we must overhaul the way Washington spends taxpayer dollars by imposing some constitutionally mandated fiscal discipline. We must pass the balanced budget amendment and we must take appropriate actions to protect and preserve the trust fund.

While I understand the arguments of those who have supported the various Social Security amendments during this debate, a more reasonable approach would be to take Social Security off budget after the budget is balanced. Congress should begin considering legislation that ensures Social Security benefits will be payable for the current and future generations, stops the use of trust fund surpluses on other Government programs, and puts real assets in the Social Security trust fund.

For now, let us face it: we will never achieve a balanced budget if Social Security is taken off budget and omitted from our deficit calculations. President Clinton himself has come to that very conclusion.

Mr. President, a bipartisan coalition in Congress is committed to passing a balanced budget amendment in 1997 because we believe the taxpayers deserve a responsible Government that pays its bills and saves for the future.

We also support passing the balanced budget amendment in 1997.

Ending deficits and lowering the national debt will free up public and private resources for more productive and innovative uses in the global economy

of the 21st century. On a more personal level, working Americans will benefit directly when a balanced budget leads to lower interest rates that could save a middle-class family about \$125 a month in lower mortgage, car, and student loan payments.

The 105th Congress has a historic opportunity and obligation to leave a legacy of responsible governing for the generations to come. The path is well marked: To one side leads the road to bankruptcy and America's fiscal ruin; to the other, the path of political promises which may or not be kept; while directly ahead lies the trail of discipline, discipline, discipline we must—pursue the road to prosperity and accountable governing marked by passage of the balanced budget amendment.

Mr. President, I thank you. I yield the floor.

Mr. REID addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak in morning business for up to 15 minutes.

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

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I also ask unanimous consent that Jerry Reed, a congressional fellow, be allowed to have floor privileges during the pendency of Senate Joint Resolution 1.

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

#### SOCIAL SECURITY AND THE BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, people continually talk about using Social Security. "Let's use Social Security until we balance the budget, and then after that we will not use it any more."

That argument says it all, Mr. President, because, if you use Social Security, it makes it pretty easy to balance the budget. If we want to really balance the budget let's do it the right way, the hard way, the honest way. Let's not use the surpluses—this year alone over \$8 billion. That is the easy way to balance the budget. But it is not the right way.

Dorothy Ray from Reno, NV, wrote to me:

I urge you to fight all attempts to cap, cut, tax, or otherwise cut Social Security benefits and to focus on the real causes of the Federal deficit. Social Security is an earned entitlement that does not contribute 1 cent to the Federal deficit. We workers and retirees and employers have paid and continue to pay special taxes. We fund Social Security. The Federal Government has no right to borrow our Social Security and deplete all the reserves which we contributed for this purpose. Please fight all attempts to cut or rob us of our earned benefits.

Sincerely,

DOROTHY RAY.

I heard also from Sparks, NV, from Bernice Murray. She wrote to me: