

capital budget if this amendment passes in its current form.

So, Mr. President, both on the basis of Social Security as well as the analysis of the Congressional Research Service—also confirmed by the Treasury Department—that we would be precluded from even considering a capital budget, I think these are issues that ought to weigh very heavily prior to the time our colleagues vote tomorrow afternoon.

I am also very concerned about the implications for recession. When there is an economic downturn, there is no doubt that we need to respond in ways that will allow us adequate time, adequate resources, and adequate flexibility to ensure that the downturn does not get any worse. We must ensure that we have some sort of a reflexive countercyclical approach to the economic consequences that we could be facing were we to do nothing. This legislation undermines our ability to do that.

I have heard it said many times that if it is a national emergency, clearly by the very definition of “national” you are going to have a sympathetic Senate responding to the circumstances and a sympathetic House responding to these circumstances in ways that would easily allow us to reach that threshold.

Well, I ask, what about a regional recession? During the early 1990's and late 1980's, there were seven or eight very deep regional recessions. The fact is that on many occasions were we to have presented some sort of a countercyclical, antirecessionary legislative remedy, I think it would have been very difficult, if not impossible, to reach that 60-vote threshold simply because of the circumstances that involve the regional implications of a recession.

So, I think it is very disconcerting to be locking into place forevermore the requirement that a supermajority be the threshold by which a countercyclical recession package be considered.

In addition, a poorly crafted balanced budget amendment deprives us of the automatic stabilizers that cushion the blows of a weakening economy. As an economic downturn begins, Government spending automatically increases just as tax revenues decline. Such a time would prove the worst moment to increase taxes or cut spending. Yet, a balanced budget amendment could require exactly that result, with potentially devastating consequences. A recession could be turned into a depression under those circumstances.

The risk of default and shutdowns are also very disconcerting. The fact is that a supermajority requirement under this constitutional amendment may preclude our ability to reach the threshold necessary to increase the statutory debt limit at times in the future. A minority of our colleagues could hold U.S. creditworthiness hostage were we to pass an amendment that allows the minority in this coun-

try to dictate whether or not we are going to increase the debt limit. How many times have we been on the floor and struggled to find a simple majority to do what has been required? I think it is going to be extraordinarily difficult for us with the supermajority requirement to do it at any time in the future.

National security is also a very serious matter. Section 5 of the pending amendment jeopardizes our ability to prepare for situations that we know will require intervention, such as the Persian Gulf effort. For Congress to waive the balanced budget amendment, the United States must be engaged in military conflict—must be engaged.

In Desert Shield we needed to build up before the conflict. In Desert Shield we stipulated that the conflict was imminent, and, as a result, we needed to prepare to be as aggressively engaged as that resolution provided. To say that there has to be conflict before we can issue or provide for any legislative support, in my view, is extraordinarily poorly worded and ill-founded.

Finally, Mr. President, with regard to the budget itself, I think our record over the last 5 years demonstrates that where there is a will there is a way. There has been a will. We have reduced the deficit from \$295 billion to \$107 billion since 1993. We have reduced the deficit by 60 percent through congressional action.

Obviously, we need to go the rest of the way. But clearly, if we are going to achieve our goals in balancing the budget, we can do so if we continue to commit as successfully and as aggressively in the next 5 or 6 years as we have in the past.

But I am troubled in that regard as well, Mr. President, because there are proposals, including the one offered by the majority leader, that would create a deficit of more than \$500 billion in new tax breaks were we to pass the bill that he has proposed—\$500 billion over 10 years and \$750 billion, three-quarters of a trillion dollars, in the second decade that that tax bill would go into effect.

So, it is very difficult for me to understand how some of my colleagues on one hand can argue that we need to pass a constitutional amendment to balance the budget, but then offer legislation which exacerbates the problem by a substantial margin of \$500 to \$750 billion in additional deficits if that legislation were to pass.

I might remind my colleagues, even if we balance the budget, we have a \$5.5 trillion accumulated debt that we have not yet paid down.

The difference between the deficit and the debt is that the deficit, of course, is what we accumulate in new debt every year; the debt is what we have already accumulated. And we have accumulated a lot. When are we going to start buying that debt down? And how are we going to do that if we continue to exacerbate the problem, continue to complicate our situation

by offering tax measures that allow a deficit of that magnitude to be added on to the troubles that we are facing over the next couple of years? Mr. President, for all those reasons, I hope my colleagues will take great care as they make their choices tomorrow afternoon.

The leader had suggested that he has a couple of potential surprises in his pocket. Well, I guess I have to announce to my colleagues that I have a couple of surprises that I do not wish to talk about right now to ensure that the vote will be as we expect it will. But I do not think it ought to be a question or a contest of surprises or parliamentary maneuvers or amendments that may or may not be in our best interest.

The question can be and will be and should be: Can we have a good debate about any one of a number of divisive issues like we know we have to face in this Senate, on a number of very, very difficult matters that will keep coming back? Can we do it in a civil way? Can we do it in a way that does not in some way question the motives or the positions taken by some of our colleagues? Can we do it with an expectation that will resolve that matter and go on to yet another and another day?

I hope we can do that. I hope the leadership will set the example as we do that. I hope that after the vote tomorrow we can move on to other things. We are prepared to debate this longer if we need to do that. I hope that will not be the case. We should move on and get work done in the body and move on with some expectation that bipartisanship is still alive and well and flourishing here in this body.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia is recognized.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I first thank my distinguished colleague who so kindly allowed me to precede him on the floor for a few minutes.

TRIBUTE TO REMMEL T. DICKINSON

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I pay tribute to my most senior staff member who is departing after a well-earned career to take on other pursuits. I do so with a sense of sadness, but indeed, a great sense of recognition for an individual upon whom I have relied, as have many other Senators. Rem is meritorious among his peer group of staff in the Senate and is recognized as the type of individual who is the very foundation upon which we, the 100 Senators, have to rely every day. His support and advice enables us to represent our respective constituencies and to do what we individually think is in the best interests of our Nation.

Remmel T. Dickinson's service in my office began February 12, 1979, and he is to complete his Senate career on Wednesday, March 5, an impressive 18 years, on my staff, and serving 20 years in the U.S. Senate.

He proudly hails from Little Rock, AR, but developed early on in his career in the Senate an equal if not greater loyalty to the Commonwealth of Virginia. I must hail him for that.

From the campaign on which I was first elected, in 1978, he came on to the Senate, and like so many, he did not want to start anywhere but right down at the threshold level where he could learn the system all the way up. Indeed, he started in that all-essential institution known in the Senate as the mail room, which in many respects is the heartbeat of every Senate office.

With meticulous attention to detail and congenial personality, and I want to underline that, Rem gained the admiration of his peers in the Senate wherever they may work, and his peers throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia, because he was very loyal to many, many people in Virginia. He was a true friend, and is today and always will be, to those that are disadvantaged in our society—be it with physical problems, educational problems, health problems, or whatever it is. The bigger the problem, the bigger the challenge, the harder Rem Dickinson worked to solve it.

The Federal employees are often a very beleaguered group. He was there no matter what the challenge, to step up and advise me and other Members of the Senate, and indeed, staffers throughout this institution, on what he felt was best and equitable for the Federal employee. And not just those in the greater Metropolitan Washington area, but all across the United States he was recognized for his knowledge as it related to the essential services provided to the Federal employee by our country. Equal access for quality education opportunities and equal access in our health care system were his goals, and indeed we have achieved that and will go on to try and improve on those achievements here in the Senate.

In past years, Rem worked tirelessly on the Republican Health Care Task Force striving for solutions to the dilemma confronting millions of Americans who simply did not have health insurance and the millions more attempting to cope with the ever-increasing problems associated with increasing health costs.

In the area of education, Rem has helped in supporting our States to provide educational service for students with disabilities, known as IDEA. His attention has also focused on impact aid, a program which local school districts, those local districts colocated with military bases all across our Nation, and helping to get those funds which will enable the children of military families to receive their education in the local school districts without too severely impacting the costs of others who contribute, by and large, through local real estate taxes.

Rem believes, as I do, that education is the key to a better quality of life for all Americans. He has earned a reputa-

tion for honesty and professionalism both in the Senate and, as I said, throughout Virginia. My constituents have had an open door to the Senate's work through Rem's expertise in these areas.

As the years have passed, I am impressed by his dedication to duty, his loyalty to this Senate, to those on my staff, and to those on other Senate staffs, and indeed on a one-on-one basis with many Senators. Above all, he is a gentleman of honor in the finest traditions of the South which he loves.

Indeed, Rem has earned the loyalty, respect, admiration, recognition, and gratitude of virtually everyone with whom he has come in contact during his lifetime.

And I can only presume that the manner in which he has carried himself, and the care he has exercised in the performance of his duties will continue in whatever Rem chooses to do when he departs the Senate.

We will miss Rem's daily good counsel. I commend Rem for a career well spent and well conducted, and I congratulate him on the contribution he has made to our Nation, to Virginia, and we wish him the best in his future pursuits.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

Mr. BINGAMAN. I ask unanimous consent I be allowed to speak for up to 12 minutes in morning business.

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

RECENT REPORTS AND GROWING AGREEMENT ON THE NEED FOR HIGH ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, first I would like to call attention to several recent reports that have come out on the issue of high academic standards and the need for high standards and national standards in our schools, and refer to those reports and perhaps put them in context.

I think it is clear from the reports that I am going to refer to here that there is a need for accelerating the progress that our country is making in developing world class academic standards. It is also clear that the States and local school districts are having great difficulties in determining for themselves what those standards ought to be, which is a large and costly task.

First, I will refer to the comprehensive Third International Math and Science Study that was recently released. It shows that math standards have not yet been implemented at the classroom level in many of our schools, and our students score at or below the average on math and science compared to students in other nations.

Mr. President, you will remember that one of the goals which the Governors and President Bush established in Charlottesville in 1989 was that the United States would be first in the world in math and science by the year 2000. In fact, the reality is very dif-

ferent from that lofty goal that was set 8 years ago.

This first chart here indicates the average math scores of eighth graders on international tests. We can see in the group of nations that are considered top performers that the United States is not listed. Those nations are Singapore, South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, and Belgium-Flemish.

In the middle range, the United States is at the very bottom, far behind the Russian Federation. After us, there are the bottom performers, and the most we can say with pride is that we are not in that category.

But, Mr. President, I think most parents in this country would aspire to our doing better than we are showing we have done on this test. And I hope very much that we can.

Here is a second chart that makes somewhat the same point. This chart indicates that of students scoring among the top 10 percent of eighth graders on international tests, 45 percent of these were from Singapore, and 34 percent from South Korea. It goes on down to where, in math the United States had only 5 percent of the world's top students in math, and only 13 percent in science. So, clearly, again, we find ourselves very far down on the list of nations in this comparison.

There is also a new national report card on education that has been published by Education Week, which is a respected publication in our country. It confirms the findings of several previous reports that the standards many States have now established may not be rigorous enough compared to other nations' standards, and, also, that there are all too few States that plan to hold students or teachers accountable for measurable results.

Let me show you these two charts to make this point, Mr. President. The first of these is a chart entitled, "Who's Accountable?" What this essentially says is that only those few States that come up on the map here as colored yellow are States that have standards for their graduates from high school. Clearly, most of the country—and, unfortunately, my State included—do not have accountability standards that students have to meet in order to graduate from high school. Clearly, this is a problem that we need to address as a nation.

Another chart, "8th Grade Math Course-Taking." This indicates very clearly that most of our eighth-graders are simply taking general math and only 19 percent, according to this analysis, are, in fact, taking algebra at the time they go into the eighth grade. This is one of the reasons we do so poorly on the international comparisons of mathematics scores.

Finally, the 1996 National Assessment of Educational Progress math scores, which were just released last week, show that over 30 percent of 4th, 8th, and 12th-graders lack basic math skills, despite recent progress.

Let me show you that chart, Mr. President. When you look at this, you