

sure how the fire started, but shortly after firefighters arrived to investigate reports of smoke, a broken window fed the fire with a sudden rush of oxygen. The result was a fiery explosion that shattered storefront windows and blew out the rear wall of the building, causing a rain of bricks to fall on Larry and Mike Blote, two owners of the building, and Pat Dobbs, a reporter for the Rapid City Journal. Thankfully, they had just minor injuries.

Soon after the explosion, Fire Chief Owen Hibbard made the difficult decision to retreat from the building. Few choices are more painful for firefighters. They are by nature people whose instincts urge them to save and preserve, and to fight a fire until the end. Yet as the flames of the Sweeney Building climbed higher and 40 mph winds blew cinders and sparks onto the roofs of neighboring buildings, Chief Hibbard recognized that the out-of-control blaze could destroy the entire block. Ordering his people back, he formed a defensive line around the fire and began the difficult work of containing it. Over the next 2 hours, with the sounds of exploding gunpowder and ammunition thundering from the burning First Stop Gun and Coin shop, the firefighters labored to cool nearby buildings and reduce the intensity of the blaze. By 4 p.m., the fire had been successfully contained, and dozens of homes and businesses that could have been destroyed were saved.

Mr. President, I commend the Rapid City Fire Department for their outstanding job containing this fire. It is due to their preplanning, training, and strong leadership that no one sustained serious injuries, despite dangerous circumstances ranging from backdraft explosions to ricocheting bullets. I also want to thank Mayor Jim Shaw for his calm and solid leadership throughout this crisis. The loss of the Sweeney Building has been difficult, especially for those men and women who lost their livelihood, but I am confident that, together, we will recover.

I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. COLLINS). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THOMAS. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 7 minutes as in morning business.

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

THE BUDGET

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, we are going to, this week, enter into one of the most serious debates that we will have all year, one of the matters that I think is the most serious that we will address all year, and that is the ques-

tion of the budget. As a matter of fact, it is my understanding we will talk about two budgets. One will be the appropriations for the supplemental budget, designed to deal with disaster and other matters, but then the real budget for the year which will outline the spending for this country.

I think this is important, particularly important, because there is much more to it than arithmetic. It is not simply numbers. It is not simply what we will spend. I think it has to do with a number of things that are of particular significance. I hope that we give some consideration to these broader things as we talk about numbers, which we inevitably will do. One has to do with the size of the Government. It has to do with the potential and the opportunity to reduce the size of Government. I happen to believe that Government has become too large and that it could be smaller. It could be much more efficient. I suspect it would be more efficient if it were smaller. The budget is one of the ways that you do that.

Government by its nature does not get smaller unless somehow there is a restriction on the amount of money available. I think it also gets more efficient when there is less money to do the job, and it is similar to what has to be done in the private sector.

Second, it has, of course, to do with priorities. Each of us, as we spend our money, whether in business or personal and private family lives, have to set priorities. There is never enough money for everything. Certainly that is increasingly true with Government. So it is necessary to set priorities, to decide which of the many functions of Government are most important, which ones need to be financed, which ones need to be funded, which ones, indeed, could be reduced or eliminated.

Third, it has to do with taxing. It has to do with how much money we are going to allow families to keep, to spend for themselves. Average family spending for taxes now is nearly 40 percent, 40 percent of revenue from the family. It was just recently that we had tax day, so that everything we earned up until just a week or so ago all went for taxes.

The budget has to do with the potential, the possibility of reducing the burden on the families in this country. It has to do with the incentive for investment. Tax reduction is also an opportunity to have investments for people to put into their businesses, to create jobs, to strengthen the economy. There is a direct relationship, particularly in tax reductions such as capital gains which encourages people to invest.

The budget gives us an opportunity to keep Medicare and entitlements available.

I just met this morning with a great group of young people, high school people. We talked a little bit about entitlements. We talked specifically about Medicare. Frankly, all of them, 18

years old, said, "We really do not think there will be any Medicare for us." Indeed, there will not be unless we make some changes. Budgets, of course, are where it is possible to do that.

Budgets also test our willingness to be financially responsible, to balance the budget and not spend more than we take in, which we have done for more than 30 years here in this Congress. I have to say I have not done it for 30 years because I have not been here for 30 years.

Finally, and related to that, of course, budgets determine what will we leave to our kids to pay in terms of budgets, in terms of debts. What we have done, of course, over the last few years, is we have spent more than we took in and put it on the old credit card, and it is maxed out. So we will determine how much of a debt we leave to our kids.

That is what we are talking about in terms of budgets. It will be difficult. It will be difficult. American voters, as someone said, and I think it is true, sent two teams to do the same thing, two teams with quite different philosophies. If everyone here had the same philosophy then we would have a certain kind of a budget. If everybody believed we ought to have smaller Government, we would have smaller Government. If everybody thought we ought to have more tax relief, we would have that, but everybody does not. There are two different points of view that will have to be reconciled before anything can be done.

So we approach a budget with, I think, a certain amount of reserve. Certainly this is not a breakthrough budget. This is not a turnaround. This is not a change, a sea change, I do not believe. I do not think it is designed for meaningful reduction in the size of Government or spending reductions. It is not dedicated to real honest-to-goodness tax relief.

Now, on the other hand, I think in fairness, and we will have to talk about it, it does provide some of the principles that most of us have talked about for some time. It probably comes closer, and I hope it does, to a real balance than any budget in recent history over a period of 5 years, a real balanced budget.

Now you have to keep in mind you can balance the budget in many ways. You can continue to increase taxes and increase revenue and balance the budget up here, when the real idea that most people want to balance the budget is down here, and reduce some of the spending.

Second, it provides some tax relief. We are told that there will be an opportunity on the floor for debate of tax relief. One will be \$500 per child for family relief. That is good. Another would be some relief of capital gains taxes. That is good. It will help the economy. And in the short term, at least, it will increase revenues. Some reduction in estate taxes, I think, is good.

In my State of Wyoming, there are lots of family farmers, ranches, and

small businesses. People have worked all of their lives—and many times the lives of their forebears—to put together a business or a ranch or a farm, often with relatively little flow of cash but lots of assets. Under the present circumstances, that is taxed at nearly 50 percent. Many have to sell those assets in order to pay the taxes. That ought to be changed.

There will be some effort made at entitlement reform. That is good. It helps preserve Medicare for people who will be on it in the future. There has to be some changes made to do that. So it is a kind of a mixed bag, it seems to me.

There are some other items I would like to see changed. I would like to see some incentives to increase the capital gains so that there is incentive to invest in the economy.

I would like to see some real long-term meaningful changes in Medicare so that our kids will have a chance.

The President has sort of tinkered around the edges, and takes down the providers' cost a little here and there to avoid any real tough decision, but he is doing a little something. We have to make them. The sooner we make them, the less costly they will have to be. We need to allow families to keep more of their dough.

We need to be careful about balancing the budget and about making very optimistic projections in the future. Suddenly, there was \$200 billion—plus because of the projections for the future.

We ought to make kind of a level projection, it seems to me. And then, if we are fortunate enough to have revenue growth, why not apply that to the debt? Wouldn't that be a nice idea? But no, we put that on so that we continue to spend and see the Government grow larger.

These are some of the things we will be grappling with this week. I think they are very difficult ones, and some things I hope we do regardless of what we do with the tax bill, regardless of what we do with the budget. I hope we move on past that to reform the tax system. The tax system needs to be changed.

People are increasingly complaining about the IRS. And I understand that. The tax issue is not going to change the IRS a great deal until you change the system that they have to enforce. We ought to do that.

This budget should not mean we are going to leave it as it is for 5 years. We need meaningful reductions in taxes.

We need a smaller Government. We need to change the situation so that the Government doesn't compete with the private sector in those things that the Government does that are commercial in nature. We ought to allow for contracting, and let private small businesses be able to compete to do things that the Government does that are basically commercial.

Mr. President, there is something else that I think we ought to do that would help us. We ought to have a biennial budget.

We spend almost all of our time with this budget. We started this thing just about this time in January when the Congress came in. We will be very fortunate if we are through by the middle of September or the 1st of October. And, as you know, Mr. President, it has been longer than that in the past.

It wouldn't take any longer to do it on a biennial basis. We could know those figures just as well. The agencies would have 2 years of knowing where their money is going to be. But, most important of all, we could have the budget one year and the next year do oversight. That is part of Congress' responsibility, to oversee the things that the Government is doing. We can accomplish a great deal, if we can do that.

So, Mr. President, I look forward to this week's debate and discussions. I am confident we will come out of it with something better than we have had.

Thank you for the time.

I yield the floor.

Mr. SANTORUM addressed the Chair. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, thank you.

PARTIAL-BIRTH ABORTION BAN ACT OF 1997

Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to announce that in the last few days I have been working with Representative CANADY in the House, with Senator FRIST here in the Senate, and with the American Medical Association in trying to work out some changes to H.R. 1122, the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act, which would satisfy some of the concerns that the board at the American Medical Association had with the legislation.

I am very pleased to report that we have been able to reach some technical changes with the legislation that has gained the support of the American Medical Association. I will read for the RECORD and insert into the RECORD a copy of a letter that was sent to me just a very short time ago from P. John Seward, M.D., executive vice president of the American Medical Association.

DEAR SENATOR SANTORUM: The American Medical Association (AMA) is writing to support HR 1122, "The Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act of 1997," as amended. Although our general policy is to oppose legislation criminalizing medical practice or procedure, the AMA has supported such legislation where the procedure was narrowly defined and not medically indicated. HR 1122 now meets both those tests.

Our support of this legislation is based on three specific principles. First, the bill would allow a legitimate exception where the life of the mother was endangered, thereby preserving the physician's judgment to take any medically necessary steps to save the life of the mother. Second, the bill would clearly define the prohibited procedure so that it is clear on the face of the legislation what act is to be banned. Finally, the bill would give any accused physician the right to have his

or her conduct reviewed by the State Medical Board before a criminal trial commenced. In this manner, the bill would provide a formal role for valuable medical peer determination in any enforcement proceeding.

The AMA believes that with these changes, physicians will be on notice as to the exact nature of the prohibited conduct.

Thank you for the opportunity to work with you towards restricting a procedure we all agree is not good medicine.

Sincerely,

P. JOHN SEWARD, M.D.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have that letter printed in the RECORD.

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

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION,
Chicago, IL, May 19, 1997.

Hon. RICK SANTORUM,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

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Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, before I go into the details of the amendment, let me also enter into the RECORD a statement by Senator BILL FRIST.

I cannot emphasize enough how important he has been as the only physician here in the U.S. Senate in helping us in the debate here on the Senate floor and providing that expertise that is so necessary in these kinds of medical issues, and also in helping us work with the AMA to come up with some language that could garner their support.

I quote Senator FRIST's statement. He would have been here to announce this. But I understand we are going to be closing up shortly, and he is still on an airplane.

As the only physician in the Senate, I am proud of the American Medical Association's decision to support the ban on partial birth abortions. This is the strongest medical confirmation yet that this so-called medical