

THE CONCURRENT BUDGET RESOLUTION

Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, earlier today I supported and the Senate passed a budget resolution negotiated primarily by the leadership of the legislative and executive branches of our Government.

I supported this budget resolution, notwithstanding some major disappointments with both the process and the result.

I qualify my support for the final agreement because I believe it falls well short of the goals that we should have for a responsible fiscal policy to guide our Nation over the next 5 years and beyond.

But in the end, I recognize that this is probably the best product the congressional leadership and this administration could agree on, and that we're much better off doing something than doing nothing.

And reaching this general consensus will free the Congress to get on with many of the important matters that continuing gridlock would have postponed.

The commitment to reach a balanced budget early in the next century can trace its roots to the hard work done by the President in 1993 and the insistence last Congress, by the new congressional majority, that we set 2002 as a "date certain" to actually reach balance.

And I think it's fair to add that I doubt this agreement would have been possible without the bipartisan groundwork laid by the Centrist Coalition, a group of 22 Senators evenly divided between both sides of the aisle.

Our budget was the only balanced budget plan introduced last year which received bipartisan support.

Since passing the administration's deficit reduction package in 1993, we have brought the deficit down from \$290 billion to what most forecasters expect will be a \$67 billion deficit this year.

With the aid of lower deficits, low interest rates, and low inflation, the economy continues to expand, bringing unemployment down to 4.9 percent and filling the Federal Treasury with unexpected receipts.

These fundamentals, which I believe were set in motion with the passage of the 1993 plan, have now put a balanced budget within our grasp, even if we're relying on some optimistic assumptions about revenues on future Congresses making tougher decisions than we are making in this budget, and on the Social Security surplus to reach that future balance.

This is not an insignificant event. The last time the Federal Government submitted a balanced budget was in 1968—for fiscal year 1969—and the surplus that year was only \$3.2 billion.

As one who came to the Senate in January 1989 pledging to do all I could to eliminate persistent budget deficits, the prospect of actually reaching our goal, even 5 years down the road, is certainly a welcome milestone.

As I have already noted, however, this agreement is not all I had hoped it would be.

First, I'm very concerned about the assumptions which underlie the plan.

Less than 3 weeks ago, negotiators were putting the finishing touches on this same basic budget outline, with a deficit of approximately \$50 billion in 2002.

It was only after the Congressional Budget Office revised its revenue forecasts that negotiations were able to claim a balanced budget.

To fully understand the impact of the CBO revision, the deficit projections for the next 5 years are now a total of \$250 billion less than what CBO projected in January.

If we want to increase the likelihood that we will actually achieve balance, it seems to me that we would want to use the most conservative economic forecast that we have.

If we err in our projections, I would rather err on the side of doing more deficit reduction than less than what is needed to do the job.

But even if the more optimistic assumptions come true and we do balance the unified budget in 2002, this plan does little to address the long-term fiscal challenges we face, and in some ways may exacerbate them.

While the budget calls for some modest steps to restrain the growth of entitlement spending, in the areas of Medicare and Medicaid, these modest steps do not prevent entitlement spending from taking a larger share of the budget.

Mandatory spending in the form of entitlements and interest on the debt will consume over 70 percent of the budget by 2002.

This represents a complete reversal from 30 years ago when 70 percent of the budget went for defense and other discretionary investments.

And as mandatory spending takes up a greater share of the budget, that leaves less room for investments in human and physical capital that enhance future productivity and economic growth.

Not only does this budget not call for significant entitlement reform, the inclusion of tax cuts with large out-year costs also exacerbates our long-term fiscal problems.

As all of us know, we face a demographic wave, called the baby boom generation, that will double the number of people eligible for Social Security, and Medicare, between now and 2030.

By not addressing the long-term costs of Medicare and Social Security, and by failing to adopt an accurate measure of cost-of-living changes, entitlements will continue to grow at an unsustainable pace. That is at the same time, the tax cuts in this budget plan will take away the revenue needed to finance these expenditures.

The most likely result of this scenario is the continued cutbacks on defense and other discretionary priorities

in the future or even larger budget deficits than what we have faced in the past.

As a result, I view this budget as more of a missed opportunity to address our long-term fiscal challenges rather than the budget balancing achievement that many are celebrating.

Notwithstanding my reservations about this agreement, however, and my disappointment in some of its elements, I applaud the President and the congressional leadership for their efforts to end the gridlock and reach a compromise that both sides could live with, even though the deal closers were more spending to satisfy Democrats and more tax cuts to satisfy Republicans—tax cuts I might add that are made with borrowed money. Less of each would have eased the debt burden we are passing on to future generations, and I will work with my colleagues to make it a more fiscally responsible plan along the way.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWNBACK). The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, in order to accommodate several Senators who wish to speak, I now ask unanimous consent that the following Senators be recognized to speak in the morning period in the order in which they are listed: Senator ABRAHAM for 15 minutes, Senator BYRD, and then Senator GRAMS.

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

The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Mr. ABRAHAM. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. ABRAHAM pertaining to the introduction of S. 810 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. ABRAHAM. I thank the Chair and other Members for their courtesy today. With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senator from West Virginia is recognized.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I have been asked by Mr. DORGAN to ask unanimous consent that following the order recognizing Mr. GRAMS, which has already been entered, that he, Mr. DORGAN, be recognized for not to exceed 20 minutes.

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

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I have been asked to also ask unanimous consent that following Mr. DORGAN, Mr. GORTON be recognized for not to exceed 10 minutes.

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

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SEXES IN THE MILITARY

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, the case of Air Force 1st Lt. Kelly Flinn has highlighted the need for an independent review of gender relations in the services.

First, I think the publicity about this case has served as an understandable impetus for all of us to speak our minds on this issue. That is, I think, useful, in that relations among the sexes in the military obviously need a thorough, independent review in light of the scandals that have emerged in recent months.

It is imperative though, that as we review the rules regarding gender relations in the military, we keep our eye on the ball. The ball is that the goal should always be the most effective, combat-ready, disciplined, tough fighting force that the Nation can field. Effectiveness, discipline, unit cohesion and morale cannot ever take a second place to any other value, since the premier responsibility of the military is the national security of our Nation. If gender relations must take a back seat to that goal, that is as it should be.

In the case of Lieutenant Flinn, the military justice system has tried to do its work, in spite of all the comment and publicity attendant to this case. There is a question about whether the Secretary of the Air Force should have granted Lieutenant Flinn a general discharge in lieu of a court-martial. We all, I am sure, have opinions about that. I personally feel that the charges of lying and disobeying the order of a superior officer, never mind the charge of adultery, which, of course, no one condones, merit a disciplinary decision, and that the Secretary should not have granted her a general discharge in light of those charges. That is my opinion. Other Senators may have other views. However, I believe that the larger issue and perhaps the root of the problem in this much publicized case may lie in the military rules of fraternization. When it is permissible for members of the opposite sex to socialize, live together, or otherwise fraternize, varies considerably among the different services. The standards are seriously inconsistent. I have indicated that I intend to offer an amendment to the upcoming fiscal year 1998 Defense authorization measure which would, if enacted, establish an independent outside review commission to review the question of the appropriateness of gender integrated recruit training in the services. I think such a commission could review, as well, the rules of fraternization with the goal of recommending a single consistent fraternization standard for conduct among enlisted people, between enlisted people and officers, and among officers, which spans all the services. What is appropriate for a soldier in the Army should also be appropriate for a sailor or an airman or a marine.

Mr. President, clearly we are in the middle of a national debate on gender relations and on general conduct in the services, and the work of an independent commission to review the many issues which have arisen seems urgent, needed and very useful. In the meantime, I believe that we politicians should refrain from urging particular

decisions in specific cases, and let the system work in the best way that it can until an opportunity has been had to systematically review the rules regarding gender relations and conduct in all of the services.

FALLEN HEROS

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, as the traditional start of the summer outdoor season approaches, advertisers are busily reminding us that we have only three days to ready our big yards for summer, or that hooray, we have an extra day to spend on outdoor chores—using their newest tools, gadgets, and products, of course. Well, Mr. President, most of us will enjoy an extra day this weekend. That is cause for celebration. However, the purpose is to celebrate our fallen heros, not to celebrate another opportunity to spend money.

Memorial Day is set aside to remember the final sacrifice made by many brave men and women in the defense of our Nation and our ideals of liberty and justice. Though in many cases, years have passed since they laid down their lives for us, the memory of these fallen heros should not fade from our hearts, drowned out by the din of advertising or buried beneath a tide of sales circulars. I urge my colleagues, and the American public, to pause for a moment this weekend, that they fly their flags, pause to set aside their dirt-covered gloves, to brush the grass clippings from their pants legs, and to sit for a moment in the sun-dappled shade of an ancient tree, and thank these men and women who have—to paraphrase the preamble to our mighty Constitution—provided for the common defense, promoted the general welfare, and secured the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

In the United States, our fallen soldiers have been honored and remembered on Memorial Day since the time of the Civil War. That tragic conflict spawned so many spontaneous gestures of remembrance in our country that the location and the date of the first Memorial Day or Decoration Day—Decoration Day, as it was called—Ceremony is disputed.

One of the most moving and famous of the early Memorial Day tributes occurred in Columbus, Mississippi. On April 26, 1866, the women of Columbus gathered to decorate the graves of their husbands, brothers, lovers and friends who had been buried four years earlier after the Battle of Shiloh in a plot now known as Friendship Cemetery. The plot contained the remains of 1500 confederate soldiers, but it also was the final resting place for 100 fallen federal troops.

The time was reconstruction. In 1866, much of the South was under military occupation and was impoverished. Resentment and hatred still ran high on both sides of the Mason Dixon line.

But, to these war-weary women, the time for hostilities was over. After

scattering flowers on the graves of their own men, they decorated the graves of the union men with magnolia blossoms.

But, like so many of our religious and secular days of remembrance, the origin and purpose of Memorial Day have become at least partially obscured by the more immediate pleasures of a day off, the flash and danger of a car race or the anticipation of good food at a picnic.

Let me quote from a book, *The Good War*, an oral history of World War II by Studs Terkel. In 1982, a woman of thirty told Terkel: "I can't relate to World War II. It's in schoolbook texts, that's all. Battles that were won, battles that were lost. Or costume dramas you see on TV. It's just a story in the past. It's so distant, so abstract. I don't get myself up in a bunch about it."

Without a continued awareness of the real significance of this national day of remembrance, we may eventually also largely forget the difficult and invaluable lessons of the human cost and the ultimate tragedy of all warfare. Particularly today, when armed conflicts such as Desert Storm may seem glamorous, even entertaining and almost antiseptic in their efficiency, we must not forget as a nation that war always means death, destruction, broken homes, broken families, twisted and maimed bodies and devastation.

While this Nation must never shrink from armed conflict if that is the course we must take to protect our freedoms, we must also never forget nor minimize the horror of war, else we may someday risk its grisly consequences too easily.

So it is my hope, that on this coming Memorial Day, all Americans will take a few moments to remember the brave men and women who have fought and died to preserve this great nation and its principles of liberty and freedom. The personal suffering and sacrifice endured by our fallen soldiers and their families for the sake of our country must not go without a measure of recognition by each of us on this most solemn of days. These were real people, not just statistics in a history book or names chiseled on stone. These were young men and women with sisters, brothers, mothers, fathers, hopes, dreams, aspirations and fears just like the rest of us. At some future time, God forbid, the names of our own sons, daughters and grandchildren could very well be among those that are read at a ceremony honoring our fallen soldiers.

Nothing confronts us with our common humanity—with our shared responsibilities as citizens and with a renewed appreciation for the worth of our sacred and fragile freedoms like a contemplation of our national conflicts, and the sorrow, heroism, death and sacrifice that has accompanied each of them.

This weekend thousands of American families will visit cemeteries around the nation to remember husbands,