

the age of 45 who are not going to be happy when they wake up on Christmas morning and go down and check the sock and find out there is a third less in it than they were told, by the Social Security Administration, was going to be in it.

Mr. President, I appreciate your indulgence and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, may I inquire as to the state of the proceedings?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are in morning business with each Senator having 10 minutes to speak.

PROTECTING SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I will try to say what I have to say in less than 10 minutes, especially because of my regard for my esteemed colleague from the State of Connecticut, who I see has entered the Chamber.

I appreciate the intensity and commitment of the Senator from Nebraska. He is correct; we do not have on the drawing board a long-term remediation for the long-term problems of Social Security. But if we just spend and spend and spend so we continue to elevate the debt of the United States rather than curtail the spending by not spending the Social Security surplus, we are going to make it more difficult, when the time comes, to pay for the Social Security benefits for which we are committed to pay.

So I think it is important not to spend Social Security surpluses to expand Government and to make Government more and more committed and deeper and deeper in debt. It is a major benefit to the future of this country if we decide to refrain from spending Social Security surpluses, which will allow us to protect the integrity, not only of Social Security, on a more persistent basis, but certainly to protect the integrity of the finances of this Government so when the time comes for us to make payments, we will have the fiscal integrity to do so.

I know we are in morning business, but particularly today I rise to comment on and to support the Nickles amendment to the Labor-HHS appropriations bill. I support the amendment because it puts the Senate on record demanding we protect the Social Security trust fund from being raided to pay for other Government spending. The less we go into debt for other Government spending, the more likely we are to be able to honor the claims of Social Security.

So the theft of Social Security funds this year must stop. We should stop spending as if Social Security were a funding resource for all kinds of other spending programs. I am concerned the Labor-HHS bill will result in the Senate's completion of all 13 appropriations bills and, as a result, perhaps take us into the Social Security trust fund.

Some estimates have been as high as \$5 billion. I would work to delay the bill if I did not have assurances from the majority leader that the conference reports will not touch the Social Security surplus, even if Senate appropriations have, that the entirety of the package of bills we send to the President after negotiation with the House will not touch the Social Security trust fund.

The majority leader has worked tirelessly to protect the Social Security trust fund. I commend him for it, and I appreciate his ongoing effort.

Furthermore, the Congressional Budget Office has stated in a letter to Speaker HASTERT that the House plan to spend \$592.1 billion will not touch the Social Security trust fund.

If we do dip into the Social Security trust fund this year, it would erase all the hard work we have undertaken to protect Social Security.

In January, President Clinton proposed bleeding \$158 billion out of Social Security surpluses over the next 5 years. This Congress objected to President Clinton's proposal, and I am glad to say that the Congress got the President to change his mind and to take far less out of the Social Security surpluses over that 5-year period of time. I wish I could say that he had agreed to take none, and sometimes he represents it that way.

In the President's midsession review of the budget process, he said that Social Security surpluses should be spent for Social Security, period. That is right. That is the Social Security lockbox philosophy. Unfortunately, his new budget still took \$30 billion out of Social Security over the next 10 years, but that is a lot better than \$158 billion. I commend the President for moving so aggressively in the direction of the Congress.

Still the President's midsession review, while it is a vast improvement, and Congress has succeeded in moving him as far as he has moved, it is not far enough. We need to work throughout this year to demonstrate our commitment to protect every single penny of the Social Security trust fund.

In April, we passed a budget resolution that does not spend 1 dime or 1 cent of the Social Security trust fund surplus. In addition to protecting the Social Security surplus, the budget resolution sticks to the spending caps from the 1997 balanced budget agreement. It cuts taxes and increases spending on education and defense.

In addition to ordering our spending priorities correctly, the budget resolution contained a majority point of order preventing the use of Social Security surpluses for non-Social Security purposes. The Senate voted unanimously in favor of this point of order. I had the privilege of sponsoring this particular provision, and since that point, the Congress has continued along its responsible spending path and has also repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to the Social Security

lockbox concept, which is to limit Government spending to the revenues designed for Government spending, and not to have general Government spending come out of the revenues designed to provide for the retirements of America's workers.

The House of Representatives passed the Herger bill which created a supermajority point of order of protecting Social Security.

These actions demonstrate a strong commitment and dedication to protecting every dollar of the projected Social Security surplus to shoring up Social Security, making sure we treat it with integrity.

In addition, a majority of Senators have repeatedly voted for the Abraham-Domenici-Ashcroft Social Security lockbox provision. Unfortunately, the lockbox, which was approved by the House, has been endorsed by the President, and a majority of the Senate has been held hostage in the Senate by those on the other side of the aisle.

Despite this setback, we have made great progress in protecting Social Security, the integrity of the fund, and limiting the kind of spending that would jeopardize our capacity to make good on our commitments at some date when Social Security needs to call upon us.

The most important thing we can do right now is demonstrate our commitment to protecting every cent of Social Security resources to make sure they are available for Social Security and to make sure they are not spent on the operations of Government generally. This is a plan that we have agreed to under the budget resolution. We promised the American people that Social Security surpluses will be reserved for Social Security, and now is the time when we are testing that resolve.

Last year, when faced with this test, Congress failed, agreeing to an omnibus appropriations bill that raided—and I think that is the right word—\$21 billion from our retirement security fund. I voted against the bill but was unable to prevent the raid by doing so.

This year, we have all been committed to completing all our spending bills on time and avoiding the omnibus spending train wreck such as we saw in last year's \$21 billion raid.

I approve of this plan, but a necessary element of the plan is that Congress not spend resources on operating Government that were destined to and designed to support the Social Security trust fund.

The Nickles amendment would put us on record stating we categorically oppose a raid on our retirement system and will support spending cuts to let us meet that goal. As I said, according to unofficial Budget Committee estimates, the Congress is now poised to spend as much as \$5 billion out of the Social Security trust fund. If that is the case, I will vote against any plan that would do so. We must avoid filching resources from the Social Security trust fund to support the operations of Government.

This spending bill, the Labor-HHS fiscal year 2000 appropriations bill, is the last of the 13 appropriations bills to reach the floor. It is also the largest of the nondefense discretionary appropriations bills. If the estimates about this year's spending that I have referred to are correct, we are going to dip into Social Security, and this is the bill that will push us over the edge. For this reason, I commend Senator NICKLES for bringing up this amendment on this bill at this time.

Now is the time for us to stand up and say we will not support taking any money out of the Social Security trust fund to finance the operations of Government. Making sure that Social Security funds do not go for anything other than Social Security is essential to the protection of long-term Social Security integrity.

Social Security is expected to meet all of its obligations until the year 2034—until then. Starting in 2014, however, Social Security will begin spending more than it collects. It will begin spending the trust fund, the surpluses. By saving Social Security surpluses and using those surpluses to pay down the debt, Congress will ensure the Nation is on secure economic footing when Social Security surpluses diminish and then disappear. If we do not save Social Security now, it will make it that much harder for us to meet our own obligations later.

We need to protect Social Security now for the 1 million Missourians who receive Social Security, for their children, and their grandchildren. We need to protect Social Security now, and this bill fails to do that. It certainly threatens not to do it, and it is time for us to vote in favor of the Nickles amendment, and to vote against any plan that would invade the Social Security trust fund.

It is for this reason I urge my colleagues to support the Nickles amendment calling for the full protection of our Social Security resources.

I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. I thank the Chair.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL MATTERS

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, last evening after the final vote occurred, my friend and colleague from Kansas, Senator BROWNBACK, took the floor and offered an amendment which he then withdrew. I was not able, because of my personal schedule, to be here at that time. But as an original sponsor of the original legislation offered by Senator BROWNBACK, which would have created a special committee on cultural matters, I did want to simply say a few words about this.

I know this became controversial within the Senate, but I felt from the beginning that Senator BROWNBACK's intentions were not only worthy but they were relevant; that the cultural

problems which the committee, or later the task force, would have addressed are real, as every family in America knows when their children turn on the television or go to a movie or listen to a CD or play a video game.

The problems are not only real, but they are actually relevant to so many of the matters we more formally discuss on the floor of the Senate—such as the solitary explosions, violent criminal behavior, problems such as teenage pregnancies, I think all of which are affected by the messages our culture gives our children and, indeed, adults about behavior. Of course, I am talking about the hypersexual content, hyperviolent content in too much of our culture.

In this case, this effort by Senator BROWNBACK, with the withdrawal of the amendment last night, was not to culminate successfully. But the battle will go on.

Clearly, the standing committees of the Senate will—I certainly hope they will; I am confident they will—continue to pursue cultural questions because they are so important, they are so central to the moral condition and future of our country. I look forward to working on those with Senator BROWNBACK and other colleagues as we go forward.

HONORING 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESPN NETWORK

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I note there is a rule in the Senate against using props. I, just for a moment, ask unanimous consent for a transitional prop, if I might briefly hold this up.

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

Mr. LIEBERMAN. I thank the Chair.

This is my favorite ESPN parka. It gives you an indication of about what I am going to speak. It is in some sense as cultural as the first part of my comments. It does involve the influence of television on the American culture. But today, in this part of it, the news is good and the occasion is one to celebrate, particularly for those who may find some meaning in words that might confuse visitors from another planet, such as "en fuego" or "boo-yaah." Twenty years ago, a small cable television enterprise, tucked away in the woods of central Connecticut, introduced itself to America with these words:

If you're a fan, what you'll see in the minutes, hours and days to follow may convince you that you've gone to sports heaven.

True to that prophecy, the past 20 years have marked our national elevation into another world of sublime sports saturation.

In recognition of its outstanding contribution in shaping the sports entertainment industry, I wish to speak today—and I believe I speak for all of my colleagues, at least a great majority—in offering our kudos to an American sports institution and the pride of

Bristol, CT—the ESPN Network which turned 20 years old last month, on September 7. The folks at ESPN aired an anniversary special that night duly celebrating the network's unique constructive contribution to our culture, and yesterday there was a congressional reception in honor of that anniversary.

Those of us who attended not only had the chance to toast ESPN but to meet an extraordinary group of American heroes: boxing legend Muhammad Ali, football great Johnny Unitas, and Olympian Carl Lewis.

So I take the floor to pay tribute to one of my favorite corporate constituents, and I think one of America's favorite networks.

The story of how ESPN came to be is really an American rags to riches classic, and that network's unbreakable bond with the small Connecticut city of its founding is part of that story.

Bristol, CT, population 63,000, is a wonderful town, 20 minutes west of Hartford. Most famous previously for being the cradle of clockmaking during the industrial age, Bristol seemed an unlikely candidate to emerge as the cradle of electronics sports media, but it did. Believe it or not, ESPN probably would not exist today—certainly not in Bristol—if the old New England Whalers of the World Hockey Association had not had a disappointing season in 1978.

The Whalers' public relations director, a man named Bill Rasmussen, one of several employees to lose his job in a front-office shakeup at the end of that season, decided he had an idea he wanted to try. He was a Whalers man at heart, and he figured he could stay involved with his team by starting a new cable television channel that would broadcast Whalers games statewide. He even had a second-tier dream of someday possibly broadcasting University of Connecticut athletics statewide as well.

Rasmussen rented office space in Plainville, CT, near Bristol, and thought up the name Entertainment and Sports Programming Network, or ESPN. But before he had even unpacked in Plainville, he ran into his first problem—the town had an ordinance which prohibited satellite dishes. Undeterred, Rasmussen scrambled to nearby Bristol, found a parcel of land in an industrial park in the outskirts of the city, which he promptly bought, sight unseen, I gather, for \$18,000. The rest, as they say, is history.

Today, ESPN, from this same location, generates \$1.3 billion a year in revenues and is seen in more than 75 million American homes.

ESPN realized that second-tier dream that Rasmussen had. Earlier this year, his station provided exhaustive coverage of UConn athletics when the Huskies won the NCAA men's basketball championship—only the game was not broadcast statewide; it was broadcast worldwide.