

tax break for the wealthiest people over the Democratic approach to take whatever surplus we have and put it into Social Security, put it into Medicare, and bring down the national debt?

I think ours is a sounder approach. I ask the Senator from Delaware, in his experience in history and in American politics, has he ever seen the world turn so upside down that we Democrats are now the fiscal conservatives?

Mr. BIDEN. No. I must say to my friend from Illinois that I haven't. I really think a legitimate debate—a debate that is a close call, in my view, would be whether or not, for example, we should be spending the surplus to reduce the debt, or spend the surplus—we can do both—or spend more of the surplus to reinforce Social Security and Medicare. That is a traditional debate that we have. Republicans used to argue we are spending too much money on Medicare—not just that it is broken, but we are spending too much; and Social Security is inflated and we should be cutting it back.

If you told me 15 years ago that the debate would be Democrats saying let's not put as much away to reduce the debt, put more in Social Security and Medicare, and with what is left reduce the debt, and the Republicans would have been saying let's reduce the debt, and once that is done, let's try to fix Medicare and Social Security—well, I don't know. The third rail of politics has become Social Security and Medicare. Obviously, they have to be for that; everybody is for that. So nobody really talks about it.

Some courageous guys and women talk about it on the floor, about what we should be doing. But it is just a shame because there is a legitimate debate here. The truth is, for example, if you said to me reduce the debt or spend more money on cops, I would be for spending more money on cops. So it is true that there are some of us in this party who would want to spend more of the surplus for worthwhile things, such as education, law enforcement, et cetera. And it is a legitimate debate. They would say: Look, BIDEN wants to spend more money instead of putting it onto the debt. But that is not even a debate. That is not even a debate.

The debate now is to give a tax cut that no one seems to want. I would love a tax cut. My total salary is what I make here, and the American people pay me a lot of money. I would love a tax cut. I would love even more—since I have a third child going off to college for the first year, and room, board, and tuition in any private school in this country is about \$30,000 a year, I selfishly would love a tax break there. But what I would not love is my adjustable rate mortgage to change. I would not want that to change. Give me a tax cut and one little bump in my adjustable rate mortgage, and I am up more than I can save by the tax cut. So I don't know.

Both of our parties are going through a little bit of establishing, going into

the 21st century, what the pillars and cornerstones of our philosophies are. Ironically, I think for the change we are sort of a little ahead of the Republicans on where we are. It doesn't mean the American people agree with us. The debate over there seems to be that the jury is still out on where they will go. I hope, for everyone's sake, we get our bearings a little bit because it would truly be a shame if, as a consequence of a political judgment, we imperil what is the most remarkable recovery in the history of the world, essentially.

The economy in America has never been stronger within our borders or comparatively internationally. I hope reason takes hold because even I think Republicans and Democrats know more about what the polling data says than I do. But my instinct tells me this is yesterday's fight. This is yesterday's fight, but it could be tomorrow's tragedy if it prevails.

RATIFYING THE COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN TREATY

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, speaking of polls, which are what I stood up to speak about this morning, I would like to turn to the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, the comprehensive test ban treaty that was signed nearly three years ago and submitted to the Senate nearly two years ago. The American people overwhelmingly support this treaty, yet it has not even seen the light of day here in the Senate.

The Senate, as we all know, is uniquely mandated under the United States Constitution to give its "advice and consent" to the ratification of treaties that the United States enters into. In a dereliction of that duty, the Senate is not dealing with the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty.

Why is this occurring? In the view of my colleagues—including some Democrats who support the treaty—this treaty is not high on the agenda of the American people. There is very little political attraction in the issue. It is easy to keep this treaty from being brought up and discussed, because people who care about nuclear testing tend to assume that we already have a nuclear test-ban treaty in force.

President Bush did the right thing in accepting a moratorium on any nuclear tests, but that is not a permanent test-ban. It does not bind anybody other than ourselves. It merely implements our own conclusion that we don't have to test nuclear weapons anymore in order to maintain our nuclear arsenal.

Faced with this perception on the part of many of our colleagues, several of us encouraged supporters of the Test-Ban Treaty to go out and actually poll the American people. Frankly, we wanted real evidence to show to our colleagues—mostly our Republican colleagues—that the American public actually cares a lot about this issue.

I am not going to keep my colleagues in suspense. A comprehensive poll was

done. The bottom line is that the American people support this treaty by a margin of 82 percent to 14 percent. That is nearly 6 to 1.

For nearly 2 years, we Democrats—and a few courageous Republicans like Senator SPECTER and Senator JEFFORDS—have tried to convince the Republican leadership that this body should move to debate and decide on this treaty. Let the Senate vote for ratification or vote against ratification. The latest poll results are a welcome reminder that the American people are with us on this important issue or, I might add, are way ahead of us.

I know some of my colleagues have principled objections to this treaty. I respect their convictions even though I strongly believe they are wrong on this issue. What I cannot respect, however—and what my colleagues should not tolerate—is the refusal of the Republican leadership of this body to permit the Senate to perform its constitutional responsibility to debate and vote on ratification of this vital treaty. It is simply irresponsible, in my view, for the Republican leadership to hold this treaty hostage to other issues as if we were fighting over whether or not we were going to appoint someone Assistant Secretary of State in return for getting someone to become the deputy something-or-other in another Department. This treaty isn't petty politics; this issue affects the whole world.

Some of my colleagues believe nuclear weapons tests are essential to preserve our nuclear deterrent. Both I and the directors of our three nuclear weapons laboratories disagree. The \$45 billion—yes, I said billion dollars—Stockpile Stewardship Program—that is the name of the program—enables us to maintain the safety and reliability of our nuclear weapons without weapons tests.

The fact is, the United States is in the best position of all the nuclear-weapons states to do without testing. We have already conducted over 1,000 nuclear tests. The Stockpile Stewardship Program harnesses the data from these 1,000 tests along with new high-energy physics experiments and the world's most advanced supercomputers to improve our understanding of how a nuclear explosion—and each part in a weapon—works.

In addition, each year our laboratories take apart and examine some nuclear weapons to see how well those parts work. The old data and new experiments enable our scientists to diagnose and fix problems on our existing nuclear weapons systems without full-scale weapons testing. This is already being done. By this means, our nuclear weapons laboratories are already maintaining the reliability of our nuclear stockpile without testing.

Still, if nuclear weapons tests should be required in the future to maintain the U.S. nuclear deterrent, then we

will test. The administration has proposed, in fact, that we enact such safeguards as yearly review and certification of the nuclear deterrent and maintenance of the Nevada Test Site.

The administration has also made clear that if, in the future, the national interest requires what the treaty binds us not to do, then the President of the United States will remain able to say: "No. We are out of this treaty. It is no longer in our national interest. We are giving advanced notice. We are going to withdraw."

Thanks in part to those safeguards I mentioned earlier, officials with the practical responsibility of defending our national security support ratification of the test ban treaty. In addition to the nuclear lab directors, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has spoken in favor of ratification.

Support for ratification is not limited, moreover, to the current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The four previous Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs—also four-star generals—support ratification as well. Think of that. This treaty is supported by Gen. John Shalikashvili, Gen. Colin Powell, Adm. William Crowe, and Gen. David Jones, all former Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs. Those gentleman have guided our military since the Reagan administration.

Why would those with practical national security responsibilities support such a treaty? The answer is simple: For practical reasons.

Since 1992, pursuant to U.S. law, the United States has not engaged in a nuclear weapons test. As I have explained, we have been able, through "stockpile stewardship," to maintain our nuclear deterrent using improved science, state-of-the-art computations, and our library of past nuclear test results. Other countries were free to test until they signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Now they are bound, as we are, not to test. But that obligation will wither on the vine if we fail to ratify this test ban treaty.

One traditional issue on arms control treaties is verification. We always ask whether someone can sign this treaty and then cheat and do these tests without us knowing about it. The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty will improve U.S. monitoring capabilities, with the rest of the world picking up three-quarters of the cost. The treaty even provides for on-site inspection of suspected test sites, which we have never been able to obtain in the past.

Some of my colleagues believe that our imperfect verification capabilities make ratification of the test ban treaty unwise. New or prospective nuclear weapons states can gain little, however, from any low-yield test we might be unable to detect. Even Russia could not use such tests to produce new classes of nuclear weapons.

To put it another way, even with the enhanced regimen of monitoring and on-site inspection, it is possible that there could be a low-level nuclear test

that would go undetected. But what all of the scientists and nuclear experts tell us is that even if that occurred, it would have to be at such a low level that it would not enable our principal nuclear adversaries and powers to do anything new in terms of their systems and it would not provide any new weapon state the ability to put together a sophisticated nuclear arsenal.

For example, the case of China is particularly important. We have heard time and again on the floor of this Senate about the loss, beginning during the Reagan and Bush years, of nuclear secrets and the inability, or the unwillingness, or the laxity of the Clinton administration to quickly close down what appeared to be a leak of sensitive information to the Chinese. We lost it under Reagan and Bush, and the hole wasn't closed under the present administration, so the argument goes.

We hear these doomsday scenarios of what that now means—that China has all of this technology available to do these new, terrible things. But guess what? If China can't test this new technology that they allegedly stole, then it is of much less value to them. They have signed the Test-Ban Treaty, and they are prepared to ratify it and renounce nuclear testing forever if we ratify that very same test-ban treaty.

Here we have the preposterous notion—for all those, like Chicken Little, who are crying that the sky is falling—that the sky is falling and China is about to dominate us, but, by the way, we are not going to ratify the Test-Ban Treaty. What a foolish thing.

The Cox committee—named for the conservative Republican Congressman from California who headed up the commission that investigated the espionage that allegedly took place regarding China stealing nuclear secrets from us—the Cox committee warned that China may have stolen nuclear codes. Congressman COX explained, however, that a China bound by the Test-Ban Treaty is much less likely to be able to translate its espionage successes into usable weapons.

As I noted, however, the Test-Ban Treaty will wither on the vine if we don't ratify it. Then China would be free to resume testing. If we fail to take the opportunity to bind China on this Test-Ban Treaty, that mistake will haunt us for generations and my granddaughters will pay a price for it.

The need for speedy ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is greater than ever before. In India and Pakistan, the world has watched with mounting concern over the past 2 months as those two self-proclaimed nuclear-weapons states engaged in a conventional conflict that threatened to spiral out of control.

Were nuclear weapons to be used in this densely populated area of the world, the result would be a horror unmatched in the annals of war. This breaches the postwar firebreak against nuclear war—which has stood for over 50 years—with incalculable con-

sequences for the United States and the rest of the world.

The India-Pakistan conflict may be back under control for now. President Clinton took an active interest in it, and that seems to have been important to the process in cooling it down. The threat of nuclear holocaust remains real, however, and it remains particularly real in that region of the world. We can help prevent such a calamity. India and Pakistan have promised not to forestall the Test-Ban Treaty's entry into force. They could even sign the treaty by this fall. The Test-Ban Treaty could freeze their nuclear weapons capabilities and make it harder for them to field nuclear warheads on their ballistic missiles.

This will not happen unless we, the United States, accept the same legally binding obligation to refrain from nuclear weapons tests. Thus, we in the Senate have the power to influence India and Pakistan for good or for ill. God help us if we should make the wrong choice and lose the opportunity to bring India and Pakistan back from the brink.

This body's action or lack of action may also have a critical impact upon worldwide nuclear nonproliferation. Next spring, the signatories of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty will hold a review conference. (The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is a different treaty; the treaty that we still must ratify bans nuclear weapons testing, while the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which was ratified decades ago, bans the development of nuclear weapons by countries that do not already have them.) If the United States has not ratified the Test-Ban Treaty by the time of the review conference, non-nuclear-weapons states will note that we promised a test-ban treaty 5 years ago in return for the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. What we will do if we don't ratify is risk undermining the nonproliferation resolve of the nonnuclear weapon states.

Ask any Member in this Chamber—Democrat or Republican; conservative, liberal, or moderate—get them alone and ask them what is their single greatest fear for their children and their grandchildren. I defy any Member to find more than a handful who answer anything other than the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the hands of rogue states and terrorists. Everybody agrees with that.

We have a nonproliferation treaty out there, and we have got countries who don't have nuclear weapons to sign, refraining from ever becoming a nuclear weapons state. But in return, we said we will refrain from testing nuclear weapons and increasing our nuclear arsenals.

Now what are we going to do? If we don't sign that treaty, what do you think will happen when the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty signatories get together in the fall and say: "OK, do we want to keep this commitment

or not?" If the United States says it is not going to promise not to test anymore, then China will say it will not promise not to test either. India and Pakistan will say they are not going to promise to refrain from testing. What do you think will happen in every country, from rogue countries such as Syria, all the way to countries in Africa and Latin America that have the capability to develop nuclear weapons? Do you think they will say: "It is a good idea that we don't attempt ever to gain a nuclear capability, the other big countries are going to do it, but not us?" I think this is crazy.

Let me be clear. The Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty must not be treated as a political football. It is a matter of urgent necessity to our national security. If the Senate should fail to exercise its constitutional responsibility, the very future of nuclear nonproliferation could be at stake.

Two months ago I spoke on the Senate floor about the need for bipartisanship, the need to reach out across the chasm, reach across that aisle. Today I reach out to the Republican leadership that denies the Senate—and the American people—a vote on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

I was joined on Sunday by the Washington Post, which spoke out in an editorial against what it termed "hijacking the test ban." I will not repeat the editorial comments regarding my friend from North Carolina who chairs the committee. I do call to the attention of my colleagues, however, one salient question from that editorial:

One wonders why his colleagues, of whatever party or test ban persuasion, let him go on.

I have great respect for my friend from North Carolina. He has a deep-seated philosophical disagreement with the Test-Ban Treaty, and I respect that. I respect the majority leader, Mr. LOTT, who has an equally compelling rationale to be against the Test-Ban Treaty. I do not respect their unwillingness to let the whole Senate debate and vote on this in the cold light of day before the American people and all the world.

A poll that was conducted last month will not surprise anybody who follows this issue. But it should serve as a reminder to my colleagues that the American people are not indifferent to what we do here.

The results go beyond party lines. Fully 80 percent of Republicans—and even 79 percent of conservative Republicans—say that they support the Test-Ban Treaty.

And this is considered opinion. In May of last year, the people said that they knew some countries might try to cheat on the test-ban. But they still supported U.S. ratification, by a 73-16 margin. As already announced, today's poll results show even greater support than we had a year ago.

Last year's polls also show a clear view on the public's part of how to deal with the nuclear tests by India and

Pakistan. When asked how to respond to those tests, over 80 percent favored getting India and Pakistan into the Test-Ban Treaty and over 70 percent saw U.S. ratification as a useful response.

By contrast, fewer than 40 percent wanted more spending on U.S. missile defense; and fewer than 25 percent wanted us to resume nuclear testing.

The American people understood something that had escaped the attention of the Republican leadership: that the best response to India and Pakistan's nuclear tests is to rope them in to a test-ban, which requires doing the same for ourselves.

The American people reach similar conclusions today regarding China's possible stealing of U.S. nuclear weapons secrets. When asked about its implications for the Test-Ban Treaty, 17 percent see this as rendering the Treaty irrelevant; but nearly three times as many—48 percent—see it as confirming the importance of the Treaty. Once again, the American people are ahead of the Republican leadership.

The American people see the Test-Ban Treaty as a sensible response to world-wide nuclear threats. In a choice between the Treaty and a return to U.S. nuclear testing, 84 percent chose the Treaty. Only 11 percent would go back to U.S. testing.

Last month's bipartisan poll—conducted jointly by the Melman Group and Wirthlin Worldwide—asked a thousand people "which Senate candidate would you vote for: one who favored CTBT ratification, or one who opposed it?" So as to be completely fair, they even told their respondents the arguments that are advanced against ratification.

By a 2-to-1 margin, the American people said they would vote for the candidate who favors ratifying the Treaty. Even Republicans would vote for that candidate, by a 52-42 margin.

Now, as a Democrat, I like those numbers. The fact remains, however, that both the national interest and the reputation of the United States Senate are on the line in this matter.

The national security implications of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty must be addressed in a responsible manner. There must be debate. There must be a vote.

In sum, the Senate must do its duty—and do it soon—so that America can remain the world's leader on nuclear non-proliferation; so that we can help bring India and Pakistan away from the brink of nuclear disaster; and so that the United States Senate can perform its Constitutional duty in the manner that the Founders intended.

Let me close with some words from a most esteemed former colleague, Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon, from a statement dated July 20. I ask unanimous consent that his statement be printed in the RECORD after my own statement.

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

(See Exhibit 1.)

Mr. BIDEN. He began:

The time has come for Senate action on the CTBT ratification.

Senator Hatfield adduces some excellent arguments in favor of ratification, which I commend to my colleagues. But I especially want recommend his conclusion, which summarizes our situation with elegant precision:

It is clear to me that ratifying this Treaty would be in the national interest. And it is equally clear that Senators have a responsibility to the world, the nation and their constituents to put partisan politics aside and allow the Senate to consider this Treaty.

Senators, that says it all.

EXHIBIT 1

STATEMENT BY SENATOR MARK O. HATFIELD
ON CTBT RATIFICATION

The time has come for Senate action on CTBT ratification. Political leaders the world over have recognized that the proliferation of nuclear weapons poses the gravest threat to global peace and stability, a threat that is likely to continue well into the next century. Ratification of the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty by the United States and its early entry into force would significantly reduce the chances of new states developing advanced nuclear weapons and would strengthen the global nuclear non-proliferation regime for the twenty-first century. Just as the United States led the international community nearly three years ago by being the first to sign the CTB Treaty, which has now been signed by 152 nations, the Senate now has a similar opportunity and responsibility to demonstrate U.S. leadership by ratifying it.

The Treaty enhances U.S. national security and is popular among the American people. Recent bipartisan polling data indicates that support for the Treaty within the United States is strong, consistent, and across the board. It is currently viewed favorably by 82% of the public, nearly the highest level of support in four decades of polling. Only six percentage points separate Democratic and Republican voters, and there is no discernible gender gap on this issue. This confirms the traditional bipartisan nature of support for the CTBT, which dates back four decades to President's Eisenhower's initiation of test ban negotiations and was reaffirmed by passage in 1992 of the Exon-Hatfield-Mitchell legislation on a testing moratorium.

It is clear to me that ratifying this Treaty would be in the national interest. And it is equally clear that Senators have a responsibility to the world, the nation and their constituents to put partisan politics aside and allow the Senate to consider this Treaty.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for 10 minutes in morning business.

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

Mr. THOMAS. I thank the Chair.

TAX RELIEF

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I want to visit a little bit a topic that will be coming before the Senate very soon, probably tomorrow, and that is tax relief and the reconciliation bill we will be considering.