

will designate a benefit provider, which is basically an organization that would be in charge of negotiating on behalf of all the seniors that are now part of this Medicare plan, a price for prescription drugs.

Mr. Speaker, all that is essentially tinkering with the marketplace to give the little guy the power that these large HMOs and others employer benefit plans have. We can call that government control, we can call that Washington stepping in, call it whatever we want. But the bottom line is that is the only way to get the average person who is not now covered by an HMO or any kind of plan to the ability to have some control to negotiate a better price so he or she does not suffer this price discrimination that so many seniors are now facing.

My response to anybody on the other side of the aisle, or to Governor Bush, whoever says that that is price control or that is government running the program is: I do not care, as long as it works. I have got to somehow empower this guy who is going to the local pharmacy and having to pay these tremendous prices. I have got to empower him to be able to negotiate a better price, and that is what the Democratic plan would do. Call it whatever we like, I do not care. It is the only way to empower this individual to be able to fight against this price discrimination.

Let me say that the Democratic proposal, the Gore proposal, is much different from the type of strict price controls that exist in almost every other industrialized developed countries. Most of the European countries, Canada, and a lot of other developed countries around the World, basically set a price. They have real price controls. We are not talking about that. We are not talking about interfering with the market that much that we would actually set a price, but we are saying that we need to empower the average person so that they are not a victim of this continued price discrimination.

Mr. Speaker, the other charge, and the gentleman from Maine brought this up, the other charge that the Republican side and Governor Bush has made against the Democratic plan is that somehow it is a one-size-fits-all plan and people will not have a choice; that we should favor the Republican proposal, this sort of voucher, because that gives a choice because we can take that voucher and go out and decide what kind of plan we want and somehow we have choice.

Let me say that nothing is further from the truth. As I pointed out, in the State of Nevada where this program was instituted, no insurance company even wanted to sell these policies that the Republicans are proposing. The insurance companies are telling us before our committees that they will not offer these drug policies. So what kind of a choice is there if we cannot find somebody who is going to sell an insurance policy that would cover prescription drugs?

The Democratic plan on the other hand provides a tremendous amount of choice because the Gore plan, the Democratic plan, is voluntary. Seniors do not have to sign up for Medicare part D any more than they have to sign up now for Medicare part B. No one says that they have to sign up for part B and pay a premium so much a month to get their doctor bills covered. Eighty, 90, almost 100 percent of the people sign up for it because it is a good deal, and I suspect that we will get the same thing with our proposed part D for prescription drugs. Most people would sign up for it because it is a good deal.

But I remind my colleagues that it is still voluntary. If Americans have an existing employer benefit plan that covers prescription drugs and do not want to sign up for the Medicare prescription drug part D, they do not have to. We are not forcing them to. If they are in Medicare part C now and have an HMO plan that covers their prescription drugs and they have to pay so much a month, or they like that plan and they do not want to sign up for the Medicare prescription drug plan under part D, they do not have to.

In fact, I would say that the way this is set up, the way that the Democratic proposal is set up, we actually offer more variety because for those who stay in an HMO, we are going to provide better than 50 percent of the cost of the prescription drug program. So rather than see hundreds of thousands of people who are now being thrown out of their HMOs, because the HMO decided as of July 1 that they were not going to include their seniors and they are losing their HMO coverage, most of the HMOs that are dropping seniors now are dropping them because they cannot afford to provide the prescription drug coverage.

If now the government is going to say under Medicare that we cover better than 50 percent of the cost of the prescription drug program, then a lot more HMOs are going to want to sign up under the Democratic proposal, will sign up seniors, and will not drop them.

The same is true for employer benefit plans. We are also providing money to help pay for the employer benefit plan for those who have it. We are increasing choices. We are letting people stay with existing plans and boosting and shoring up those plans financially so they do not drop them. And if Americans do not want to do that, they always have the fall back of going back to the Medicare fee-for-service prescription drug program that is a guaranteed benefit.

When I say "guaranteed benefit," because my colleague from Maine again pointed out that, again, a big difference between what the Democrats are proposing and what the Republicans are proposing is that the Democrats truly have a guaranteed benefit. It is one-size-fits-all in the sense that one is guaranteed to know that if they sign up for the program, every type of

medicine that they need, that their doctor says is medically necessary or their pharmacist says is medically necessary for their health, will be covered under the Democratic plan and under Medicare.

By contrast, in the Republican plan, that basically leaves it up to whoever is going to take this voucher that they are offering and says, okay, we will take the voucher; but we are not going to cover certain drugs, we are going to charge a copayment, we will have a high deductible. These are the kinds of problems that people face now with HMOs or with a lot of the private plans that are out there that some people have been able to find.

Those problems will be magnified under the Republican proposal. If someone takes this voucher and they are trying to find somebody to cover them, they do not have to say how much it is going to cost. They do not have to say what kind of drugs they are going to get. They do not have to say what the copayment is, what the premium is. Under the Democratic proposal, all of that is provided for, all of that is structured, all of that is guaranteed.

Mr. Speaker, it is a significant difference, I think, in terms of the way we approach things.

I guess tonight if I could conclude, Mr. Speaker, I would say that we are going to be here many times. I do not know how much longer the Congress is going to be in session, probably a couple more weeks or so; and I am beginning to have serious doubts about whether this issue is going to be addressed by this Congress and the Republican leadership. I think the time is running short, and the realization is setting in that this Congress is likely to adjourn without addressing the prescription drug issue.

Mr. Speaker, I think that is a shame, because I think there really is a consensus amongst the American people that we need a Medicare prescription drug benefit. And rather than pose back and forth about which plan is better, it would be a lot better if the Republican leadership would simply accept the fact that this should be something that is included under Medicare and use the time over the next 2 weeks to come to common ground so that we could pass this.

But I do not see that happening, and it is not going to stop me and my Democratic colleagues coming here every night, or as often as possible, to demand that this issue been addressed before we adjourn.

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DEBT REDUCTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GUTKNECHT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. Speaker, I did not come here tonight to talk about prescription drugs, but after listening to my colleague from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE), I guess we are going to have to title the Democratic plan the Sugar Ray Leonard Prescription Drug Plan, because they are bobbing and weaving all over the place with their prescription drug plan, saying whatever makes people feel good without having any substance to it, when the fact of the matter is that there is only one voluntary prescription drug benefit plan out there, and it is a Republican plan.

The Democratic plan is not a voluntary plan. It is not a plan that makes real sense for seniors. And, as I say, I did not come here to talk about that tonight. But I get so disappointed when I hear people stand up here and demagogue a plan that is fair, instead of entering into real dialogue over the differences that are out there and trying to come to some conclusion.

Hopefully over the next couple of weeks, we will come to some conclusion on that, but not as long as we have the demagogue going on and the bobbing and weaving going on and the changing going on and trying to stroke senior citizens instead of being honest, straightforward and trying to work out a plan, if that type of conversation takes place, then we are not moving in the right direction, and I hope they will change their direction, they will come together and work with us to provide a plan that is meaningful and that has real substance to it.

There is one real, fundamental difference in the Democratic prescription drug plan and the Republican plan, and that is this: Under the Republican plan, the decision-making process on what drugs are needed and what drugs will be provided is going to be determined by the Medicare beneficiary, their pharmacist and their doctor. Under the Democratic plan, that decision is going to be dictated by the Federal Government, and that is not what seniors want.

Mr. Speaker, what I really came here tonight to talk about is something that is just as crucial as that particular issue, and it is the issue of debt reduction.

I want to go back and review for just a minute where we have been, where we are, and what direction we are heading in. I was elected to Congress in November of 1994, and at that point in time, our country had been operating for some 25 years plus under a deficit budget situation.

My class that came in in 1995 was committed to the fact that the American people were insistent that we balance the budget of this country. The Clinton administration had proposed deficit budgets as far as the eye could see, and that was wrong; the American people simply did not want that. They wanted us to get our financial house in order.

Beginning in January of 1995, we started making those tough decisions

right in this very Chamber that have not only led us out of the deficits, as far as the eye can see, we have balanced the budget of this country, and now we are looking at excess cash flow coming into Washington in the form of tax revenues as far as the eye could see.

In 1995, I went back and I looked at the position of the Clinton administration with respect to balancing the budget. The Clinton-Gore administration was not in favor of balancing the budget in January of 1995. In fact, the budget that the Clinton-Gore administration presented to this body in February of 1995 called for a deficit this year, the year that ends next year of \$194 billion. That means we would have spent \$194 billion more than we took in this year, and I think everyone across America knows and understands that we are now in an excess cash flow, that is sometimes referred to as a surplus, but as long as we have a significant debt staring us in the face, I do not think we can really call it a surplus.

Mr. Speaker, in testimony before the House Committee on the Budget in February of 1995, the Clinton-Gore budget director who at that time was Alice Rivlin stated as follows, "I do not think that adhering to a firm path for balance by 2002 is a sensible thing to do." She also said "it is not always good policy to have a balanced budget."

We ask the American people to sit around their kitchen table every single month and balance their budget, and yet the Clinton-Gore administration has consistently made statements exactly like this that it is not always good policy to have a balanced budget. Well, where we have come, we fought for a balanced budget for a couple of years before we finally achieved balance. But under the strong leadership of the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KASICH), chairman of the House Committee on the Budget, we did reach agreement between the House, the Senate and the White House to balance this budget of this country over a 5-year period, beginning in 1997, and the only way we were able to convince the Clinton-Gore administration that we needed to balance the budget was that the American people were on our side.

They finally realized that due to their poll-taking that they do every single day, and once they realized that they had to come to our way of thinking and we can achieve a balance, although we brought the Clinton-Gore administration kicking and screaming here in Washington to reach balance.

Well, what does reaching balance mean with respect to deficit reduction? We do have excess cash flow now in the form of both on-budget, as well as off-budget surpluses that are going to be available for any number of different types of allocations, and one of those allocations, and the strongest of those allocations, has got to be debt reduction.

Mr. Speaker, I know the gentleman from the 11th District of Georgia (Mr.

LINDER), my good friend and colleague, is here, and I want him now, if he will, to talk a little bit about this excess cash flow that we have as a result of having achieved the balanced budget and what the gentleman's thoughts are on where we ought to go with respect to allocation of these funds.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, I think, first of all, it is important to set the differences in how we got here. There has been one difference in the two parties since the day I got here, which was in 1993, and the gentleman from California (Mr. HORN) joined us at that time, and that is the Democrats want more spending and the Republicans want less spending.

Indeed, that was the debate supposedly that shut the government down in 1995 and 1996. The President said we are not spending enough money on Medicare, Medicaid, the environment and education. Indeed, we were not that far apart. We projected increasing spending by 3 percent, and he wanted 4 percent. We projected an increase in revenues of 5 percent; the President projected 5½.

We projected increasing Medicare spending over 7 years by 62 percent; the President said 64 percent. We broke down in the second part of this debate, the part that is not spoken so loudly about, values. We wanted the American people to make the choices.

We believed their giving Medicare recipients more choices, they would shop their care and bring down costs that entrusts the American people to decide. Indeed, Mrs. Clinton said in public during the debate on health care we cannot trust the American people to make these decisions.

In 1994 with a Republican majority for the first time in 40 years, we did something about spending. We eliminated in that first budget about 300 spending programs, and we had a huge fight with the President. But let us look at what changed in the economy and why we are at the point today where we can talk about paying down surpluses. If left to their own devices, this is the 1994 Clinton-Gore Democrat congressional budget, projected out to 2000, and they would have had \$4.5 trillion in public debt, about a trillion dollars in new public debt compared to where we are today.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues can see what happened in 1994, with the 1995 budget, it came down. This is what we are looking at; this is what we are looking at today. Surpluses, as the gentleman said, as far as the eye can see and increasing, indeed going back to the last Democrat-written budget, their projection for 2005 is that they would add about \$450 billion in that 1 year to debt; we are projecting adding about \$400 billion to surpluses. So we have made a huge turnaround, a huge turnaround.

In 1998 more spending. In the President's State of the Union address, 85 new spending programs, including 39

new entitlements, more than \$150 billion new spending over 5 years; \$129 billion in tax increases. Then 2 years later, the State of the Union, a \$250 billion increase in taxes and fees on working families, 84 new Federal spending programs.

Our good fortune is, none of that passed, and now we are at the era of dealing with surpluses. There have been some proposals, and we have passed some bills in this House, that said if the American people are paying more money into government than it takes to run it, they ought to get some of that back. No, said Vice President GORE, that is a risky scheme. It is, however, not risky for him to spend it, so we have a new plan.

We have a plan, if we are not going to get relief for those who pay the bills, for those who write the checks, we are going to promote economic security and fiscal responsibility, we call it the 90 percent solution.

Let us take 90 percent of next year's Federal budget surplus and use it to pay off debt while protecting 100 percent of the Social Security and Medicare trust funds.

We presented the 90 percent plan to the Clinton-Gore administration. The President indicated that his spending requests were piling up, and he said, and I quote, "whether we can do it this year or not depends on what the various spending commitments are."

Our 90 percent solution represents a fair middle ground. It is offered in the hope that while we may not agree in all aspects of the budget, we can at least agree to do something about the debt. We leave still 10 percent of the surplus to boost our already substantial \$600 billion commitment to our national priorities, such as education, defense and health research. Specifically, we will use half the money to strengthen education with the flexibility funding and support to give our children the best schools and to ensure that for success, schools must have accountability and will use the other half to grant some modest tax relief for working Americans.

This turnaround since the gentleman's election has for the first time in 30 years actually paid down debt. After this year, we will have paid down nearly a half a trillion dollars in publicly held debt; that is progress. That is a beginning. Let us do not turn it around now.

I think that the 90 percent solution is something that the American people will appreciate. For years, my generation and my parents' generation have voted for ourselves wonderful programs such as Medicare and Medicaid. Unfortunately, we just chose to pass the bill on to future generations, that is immoral. The 90 percent solution will begin to take the burden off my grandchildren.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. I thank the gentleman from Georgia. We have been joined by our friend from California (Mr. HORN) who also has some comments on these issues.

Mr. HORN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS) and the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LINDER) very much for providing the leadership in this issue.

I support the Republican plan, because it makes sense, and it pays off the national debt. This 90-10 plan commits 90 percent of next year's surplus to paying down the debt. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the 2001 surplus, 1 year away, will be \$268 billion. Under this plan, \$240 billion would go toward paying off our debt. At the same time, Social Security and Medicare are fully protected.

All \$198 billion of the Social Security and Medicare surpluses are locked away from Presidents, regardless of party. Doing this assures that funds are used solely to honor our obligations to seniors.

Paying down the debt is more than just an abstract academic exercise. It directly affects the lives of every American by helping reduce interest rates and expanding the pool of saving for investments in new jobs. Lower interest rates are good news for everyone paying off a student loan or buying a house or buying a car.

Reducing interest rates also creates new private investment in equipment, plants and factories across the land that produces jobs and sustains our economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, paying down the debt while we have a surplus is just plain common sense. In our personal finances, once we have extra money, we sure try to pay off our debts. The same principle applies to our national finances.

The 90-10 plan would completely eliminate the debt by the year 2013; that will lift an enormous burden off our children and our grandchildren.

A debt-free Nation can create a brighter future for us all, and when we think back 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, 40 years, nobody would believe that we could turn around and cut down that tremendous national debt of several trillion, and we are doing it and every American will appreciate that.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. HORN) for his comments.

Looking at what debt reduction has meant to this country and can mean to this country in very simple terms is this, you know, here we are in the midst of a political campaign, and we just heard a lot of demagogue and rhetoric from the folks on the other side about a prescription drug plan. We are going to pay this year in interest payments alone in excess of some \$230 billion to \$235 billion in American tax dollars just for that interest payment.

What in the world could we do with \$240 billion? We could be fighting over just how that money ought to be spent if we were not paying that interest payment.

What has balancing the budget done for the dynamics in this House that we are looking at today? What it has done

is we are now arguing over a prescription drug benefit program and what is the best way to approach that program and what is in the best interests of our seniors.

Do we think for 1 minute that if the budget submitted by the Clinton-Gore administration in 1995 that calls for a \$194 billion deficit this year had come to pass that we would be here today arguing over how to go further and further into debt? No, we simply would not be. We are here today having a debate over viable programs, viable programs that benefit citizens all up and down the line in this country simply because we balance the budget of this country, we acted fiscally responsible under a Republican leadership, and we are now moving in a direction where we have this excess cash flow. The debate simply is over how are we going to approach the allocation of this excess cash flow.

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Well, I know this, when we sit around my family kitchen table, and we talk about any excess money that we have got left at the end of the month, and there is never usually much there, the first thing we talk about is we look at how much debt we have got outstanding and what we can do about that debt to lower our interest payments knowing that, once we do that, there will be more money there at the end of the next month.

We have got to be fiscally responsible. A way we can be fiscally responsible in that regard is making sure we continue to grow the rate of government at a slow rate and continue to pay down this debt.

As the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT), my friend on the Committee on the Budget, has said so many times, that it is very important that we remind the people all across this country that, for the first time in modern history, the growth of the Federal budget this year is going to be less than the growth of the average family household budget. Mr. Speaker, that is amazing. It is significant; but it is very, very amazing.

What has balancing the budget and the fact that we have excess money on hand now done for Social Security? It has done something that we have not been able to do in the past 35 years.

I was home in August and had a chance to get around my district to celebrate during August the 65th anniversary of the Social Security program, without question, probably the most valuable program that we have ever implemented in this country with respect to our senior citizens. I just do not think there is any question about that.

Unfortunately, for the last 35 years, we have not been taking tax money received from Social Security taxpayers and doing anything with it other than paying our bills every month. That is wrong. We should never have let that happen. But it happened 35 years ago. We have now reversed that trend.

As the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LINDER) just stated a little bit earlier, last year, 1 year ago almost to the day today, September 30, 1999, was the first year in 35 years, according to the Congressional Budget Office, that this Congress did not spend one dime of the Social Security surplus. We stuck it in a lockbox to keep it there for our senior citizens, and we are going to continue to do that with both Social Security and Medicare.

The gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LINDER) also talked about the plan that we passed in the House last week, the plan whereby we are going to take 90 percent of the surpluses, the excess cash flow that we are going to have on hand next year, and we are going to apply 90 percent of that money to pay down the debt.

Well, I could not be happier about that, because what that does is that amounts to paying off \$240 billion of the national debt last year. As the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LINDER) alluded to earlier, when we include the last 2 years, this year and next year, we will have paid down a half a trillion dollars on the public debt.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. CHAMBLISS. I am happy to yield to the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, on the chart that I showed, the never-ending debt that the last Democrat budget that was passed for fiscal year 1995 and 10 years there out created \$3.1 trillion in new debt compared to our creating \$4.5 trillion in surpluses. A huge turn around. Those deficits that they were incurring included spending all of the Social Security surpluses.

Well, the last couple of years, we have changed the language of that debate. I do not think future administrations or Congresses would dare to dip into the Social Security fund.

Now, I think it is important that we start changing the nature of the debate over surpluses that are not on Social Security. Paying down debt should be the rallying cry of this whole country. Because if future Congresses come along, or God forbid another liberal administration with new spending programs, to spend all this money, we will have lost this opportunity.

I envision an opportunity where my grandsons will be totally out of publicly held debt for their responsibility before they leave high school. I believe the time is coming.

But it is important that we begin to let everyone know that, if 90 percent of that surplus goes to paying down debt, future Congresses are going to be reluctant to say, let us get out of that habit, let us just spend it.

I know that the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS), as the vice chairman of the Committee on the Budget, has shared with us some of the proposals he has seen, Vice President GORE's spending proposals in his campaign. Would there be any surplus left to talk about paying down debt if he were elected?

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. Speaker, not only is there not going to be any surplus left under the Gore budget plan that he has proposed, but under the very best scenario, over the next 10 years, we are going to be \$27 billion in debt. Under the worst scenario, we are going to be \$906 billion in debt. That does not include but \$27 billion additional monies being spent over the next 10 years for defense.

We are spending \$29 billion in this next fiscal year alone, trying to restore the military of this country to what it should be because of the demise under the current administration. It does not include one additional dime of increased expenditures in the area of agriculture, for example.

So what the current proposed budget of the Clinton administration does is to head us, not upwards from a surplus standpoint, as the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LINDER) just showed on his chart, but it takes us back down that same trail that this administration had us headed down before this Congress took over in 1995.

Mr. Speaker, paying off the national debt is simply the right thing to do. It will protect our children from a crippling burden in the future. By locking away money in the Social Security and Medicare lockbox, it is simply the right thing to do, not just for our children, but for our parents.

The 90/10 bill that we passed last week changed budget law so that Congress can proactively pay off debt because current law permits debt relief to occur if and only if there are surplus funds left over from that year's discretionary spending.

The bill is the latest highlight of a Republican record on debt relief that is unmatched in the history of the United States of America. Since Republicans gained control of Congress, we have paid down over \$350 billion in debt, and we are on the road to paying off at least another \$200 billion. Now we propose to continue this effort by paying down that additional \$240 billion in debt the next fiscal year.

This bill also contains the Social Security and Medicare lockbox legislation of the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER), my colleague from the Committee on the Budget, which is critical, not just to our senior citizens who are receiving Medicare and Social Security benefits today, but for the future of those two programs.

This, unfortunately, has been stalled by the Democrats in the Senate for most of the 2000 calendar year even though this House has passed both of those, has passed that lockbox bill.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. CHAMBLISS. I am happy to yield to the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, this lockbox concept, as I understand it, is simply common sense. What we are saying is we do not mix our pension plan for retirement with our operating expenses that we use for roads and

bridges and education and other congressional expenses.

So what we are saying is we take the surplus of Social Security, of grandmother's retirement, and we put it in a lockbox so that it does not get mixed and mingled with other funds; and it is safe there so that her security, her retirement is safe.

Now, what I do not understand, and my question to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS) is, why is it that Vice President GORE has led the opposition to this? Why is it that TOM DASCHLE and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT) and the Democrats have lined up against this?

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. Speaker, I think it is fairly obvious that they want to take that money and continue to spend it like they have been doing for the last 35 years. We simply cannot let that happen.

We have got a great opportunity with the excess money that we have on hand now to save and protect Social Security, to save, reform and protect Medicare, to provide a prescription drug benefit and include some other reforms in there to make sure that those two valuable programs are protected and maintained and, at the same time, not spend that money on other social programs and other programs that our children and grandchildren are going to have to wind up paying for years and years down the road.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, what bothers me as a member of the Committee on Appropriations, we get a budget blueprint from you, and the House passes our appropriation budgets based on those blueprints, and we keep the spending in line so that it is balanced, important programs, education, Social Security, prescription drugs, they are out there, they are taken care of.

Then we get into a conference committee with the White House or the Senate, and it seems like all that common sense is thrown out the window, and we break the budget year after year.

Is the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS) optimistic that we are going to be able to protect Social Security the way the Republicans on the Committee on the Budget have tried to make it possible for us to protect it?

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. Speaker, I think we can, provided the American people get involved. When the American people get involved and tell their Congressmen, "Look, we do not want you to spend our Social Security Trust Fund money," then we are going to make sure that happens.

I tell the story when I am on the road about my mother who is 83 years old, lives by herself, and depends on Social Security and a small pension that my dad left her, about the fact that she told me one time not long after I had come to Congress, she said, "Listen, son, I want you to make sure when you get to Washington that my Social Security is protected." Unfortunately,

until the last 2 years, I could not look her in the eye and say, "Hey, we are protecting your Social Security."

But now with the Congressional Budget Office certifying that, as of September 30, 1999, we did not spend one dime of that surplus on anything but Social Security, and it looks like for 2000, when we wind up the year next week, we are going to have the same certification coming from the Congressional Budget Office for the, again, only the second time in the last 35 years that a Republican Congress has grabbed ahold of this thing and we have made sure that we are not going to be spending that Social Security surplus.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, my dad is 82 years old. He is legally blind. He has diabetes. His Social Security is very important to him. But the other thing is he has saved all his life.

Now, it is popular now with the environmentalists to say, when one is brushing one's teeth, turn off the water. Well, we did that on Plum Nelly Road in Athens, Georgia, because my dad thought it was a waste of water for one to run it one more drop than necessary. If one ever left the room and the light was on, one was in trouble. My dad never bought a car that had a radio in it. When one had to buy the radio, he sure never had an FM, it was only an AM radio. He never had white wall tires on the car and never had power steering.

He fought, as did so many in that World War II generation, to save their money to get ready for a rainy day. He instilled that in us. My allowance starting out very young was a nickel a week. Then it got to be a dime a week. When I got to high school, it was \$3.25 a week because he put me on a clothing allowance. From age 12 on up, we had to buy our own clothes, which accounts for why I still look like I need an upgrade in my wardrobe. Even then, \$3.25 a week was not enough to buy one's clothes.

But the point is that generation knew what a rainy day fund was about. That is all we are saying on Social Security is save it for its intended purpose of retirement. Do not squander it on politically popular programs designed to get Members of Congress reelected for that 1 year. It might make one a hero back home in one's own little district, and it gets one back up here one more term; but it is not in the interest of the United States Government. It is not in the interest of the American people if everybody is fishing his own line and no one is worrying about keeping the boat afloat.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. Speaker, I think that is probably one fundamental difference in the demagoguery that goes on and what we have heard tonight and what we have been talking about here. I think when one is honest with the American people and one sets the facts straightforward to them, they have a greater appreciation for that

and they see through that demagoguery.

What we are talking about now are the real facts. We have got to save for that rainy day. We have got an opportunity to save for that rainy day. We should not squander that opportunity by spending the excess money that we have now on more and more social programs that are not going to improve those programs one iota.

We have got to be able to take programs like Social Security and Medicare and ensure because we know they are going to be here forever and ever and make sure that they are saved and protected.

I am impressed with the allowance of the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON). I still remember mine. It was 50 cents, and I had to give 15 cents to the church. So I had 35 cents a week.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. CHAMBLISS. I yield to the gentleman from the 11th district of Georgia.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, I agree that the point the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS) made about preserving and protecting the Social Security and Medicare are important. But I want to go back to the point that we have got the chance to pay down the debt, and we have got a significant budget surplus this year with which to do so.

There are rumors around this town that the President is not going to sign our appropriations bills, not going to finish the year unless we spend anywhere from \$20 billion to \$45 billion more in ongoing spending in programs of his choice.

□ 2045

If my colleagues will recall, in 1996 it cost us \$7 billion in yielding to the President to get him to sign our budget so we could get out of town; in 1998, he held us up for \$20.8 billion in more spending just to get the budget process finished; and, of course, those were \$7 billion and \$20.8 billion that we could have used to further reduce the debt on our grandchildren and their children.

I always thought it was kind of strange that the President held a press conference after he signed that ugly budget in 1998 and said, "The best news is I didn't let them spend one penny out of the Social Security surplus." When in fact, of course, we spent \$20.8 billion of it. Not one reporter asked him a question about that, but everyone in this town knew that we were going into the Social Security surplus just to satisfy his spending appetites and so we could get out of town.

I wish what we would have done some time ago is put a line item in our budgets from day one so that any money not committed to spending programs would be in a line item. That way, when the President comes through at the end of the year he has to say I want to spend this much more money; and we are going to say it is going to come

out of retiring the debt because we ought to have a line item in our budgets that is for our children and grandchildren and their children, to get this mortgage of their future off their back, so they can choose their priorities for their lives and the government that they support and not continue to be paying off ours.

So the 90-10 deal is a deal the American people ought to embrace. They ought to understand when the President says that we have to spend another \$20 billion that it is coming directly out of retiring the debt, directly out of our grandchildren's futures. And once we establish this goal, it seems to me, over this Congress and future Congresses, we can set the pattern just like we have set the pattern of not spending the Social Security reserves, and I do believe this will be a better country for it.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. The gentleman from the first district had another comment.

Mr. KINGSTON. Well, the gentleman was talking earlier about debt reduction, and I think it is so important. I am a supporter of lower taxes. I think it is just fundamentally wrong for the government to hold more than it needs. What are we, serfs? Is this the medieval time? Are we back in collectivist Soviet Union that we have to work to keep Washington bureaucrats happy? If we go into Wal-Mart and we buy a hammer that costs \$11, and we give the cashier \$20, we expect \$9 back. We do not expect to be given with the extra \$9 some nails and some wood and maybe some other tool. The fact is we should get our refund.

I understand that in Washington money is power and the more money that the government confiscates from people the more power that it has. And I know there are those in the administration who want that power so that they can micromanage our lives. But that being the case, we were unable to get such common sense tax reductions through as marriage tax relief or ending the tax on Social Security or ending the taxes on small businesses and individuals who want to have a full deduction to make health care more affordable and more accessible. So we have kind of gotten a deadlock on lowering the tax burden on hard-working Americans. That being the case, though, are we going to go out and squander the surplus or should we apply it and invest it in the future; invest it in our children by paying down the debt?

The gentleman has pointed out that we spend about \$230 billion to \$240 billion on interest payments on the national debt. That is just about the size of our entire national defense. Now it is a little bit higher, but that is about equal to what we spend on our military, \$240 billion. Is that not four times what we spend on education here? I know it is about four times what we spend on agriculture and nutrition programs, such as food stamps and the

WIC program for children. And if we look at all the money, this goes to nothing. It just goes to the bond holders of the national debt. It does not create jobs, it does not buy equity, it does not protect the environment or educate children, it does not give prescription drugs to seniors. It just goes out the door.

So if we can pay down the debt, and I believe the budget we are operating on pays it down by the year 2013, if we can do that, then we can invest the money in areas where we are going to get something out of it and, most importantly, a better society, which we are not getting right now when we are just paying bond holders.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. We were talking about that fact earlier, that because we are now in a situation where we have excess cash flow and we can pay down that debt, we are having the debate now over the prescription drug issue, for example. But I can just see us if we had lived up to the Clinton-Gore administration expectation of having \$194 billion deficit this year when they presented their budget in 1995. Does my colleague think we would be here arguing over how we are going to come up with an additional entitlement program within Medicare? There is just no way we would have done that.

And the gentleman is exactly right. If we had that debt payment down to zero, and we had that additional funding from what we are paying out in interest, we could do a lot of things that would benefit the American people all across the tax spectrum, all across the social spectrum, and we can make life a lot easier for folks. That is why it is just so critical. And we are talking about now 13 years, just 13 short years we could pay off this entire debt.

Mr. KINGSTON. If the gentleman will continue yielding, he has one of the rare and valuable positions as a House Member of serving on the Committee on Agriculture, serving on the Committee on Armed Services, Committee on National Security, and is the incoming chairman of the Committee on the Budget. And I know the gentleman has worked very carefully to protect not only seniors who are retired on Social Security but veterans, and to try to get the United States Government, good old Uncle Sam, to fulfill the promises that have been made to veterans.

I know the gentleman is a cosponsor of the Keep the Promise legislation for veterans who have been promised certain benefits, health care benefits; that we are actually going to deliver those, the ones the Clinton-Gore administration have cut and eroded over the last 8 years, but is it not true that the gentleman's budget also has a cushion in there to take care of our veterans as well as the other seniors?

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Not only does it have a cushion to look after veterans, but we took the Clinton budget last year, which called for a zero increase in veterans' health care, and we plussed

that budget up last year by \$1 billion and dedicated that \$1 billion just for veterans' health care.

Because the gentleman is right, that is a segment of our population that fought and risked their lives, in a lot of instances lives were lost, because those folks believed so strongly that this country ought to continue to live under that great flag of freedom and democracy and we can never forget those folks. Unfortunately, they have had a number of their rights and benefits taken away from them. Probably veterans' health care benefits have been taken away more so than any other area of their benefits. We plussed it up by \$1 billion last year and dedicated it to health care alone. This year we have plussed up the President's budget again and we have increased the budget by \$2.7 billion over last year. So we have added a total of \$3.7 billion for veterans' benefits just in the last 2 years.

Are we exactly where we want to be and ought to be with respect to restoring those benefits? No, we are not. But we are moving in the right direction in spite of a stone wall that we keep running into in the name of Clinton-Gore. They keep giving us smaller budgets, they keep wanting to reduce veterans' benefits, particularly in the area of health care, and we are taking them kicking and screaming down the road of making sure that our veterans do get the benefits to which they have been promised all these years and to which they are entitled to. And, dadgummit, we have just got to look after them.

Mr. KINGSTON. I know also one of the goals of the Committee on Armed Services, the Committee on Appropriations, and the Committee on the Budget has been to cut the paperwork so that our veterans not only have the money at the VA to provide their benefits but they do not have to go through the long procedures and the clearances and the problems that they are having with Tri-Care; that they can actually go faster to a doctor, get the treatment they want, and get to the clinic closest to them. I know the gentleman has made a major commitment in that direction as well.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. In fact, that bill was passed in this very House just last week; that where a veteran has a long distance to drive to go to a VA facility, when he needs medical treatment, we are going to have a pilot program now that we are going to look at that hopefully will be converted into a permanent program whereby those veterans will not have to drive that long distance to a facility. They will receive a voucher and they will be able to take that voucher to a physician or to a doctor close to their home and get medical treatment and have the Federal Government pay for it under the Veterans Administration.

That is a significant improvement in the delivery of health care that we are going to be able to provide to veterans.

Mr. KINGSTON. Now, maybe combining all three of the gentleman's hats of agriculture, armed services and budget, the gentleman also is providing money to get active duty personnel off of food stamps.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. When we took over control of the House of Representatives and the Senate in 1995, we had about 12,000 members of the Armed Forces who were receiving food stamps. Nobody in this House, I do not think, realized that. It came to our attention late in the process in the Committee on Armed Services. And when we discovered that, obviously everybody was appalled at that, and we began working on it.

Over the last 6 years, we have reduced that figure from 12,000 to a little bit in excess of 3,000. It is somewhere between 3,000 and 5,000. I am not sure of the exact number, but we have cut it every single year. Again, we have cut it in spite of the fact the administration has not called for significant increases in defense spending that would allow us to give pay raises to those young men and women who are having to draw food stamps to feed their kids, instead of having the security and the peace of mind and knowing that their children are going to be fed and they can look after the business of trying to defend this country.

So we have cut that list, and we are going to continue to work on it until we get all of those folks off of food stamps, because it is just not right. It is just not right. It is immoral, it is un-American, and it should not be the case. We have to continue to work on that. The gentleman is right, we are doing that with help from my colleague and the other members of the Committee on Appropriations who have been very generous in approving the defense budgets we have had over the last 6 years. And we have to continue down that road until we get all of these folks off of food stamps.

Mr. KINGSTON. To continue on this, one of the reasons why we are losing good soldiers right now is that the pay is low and they do have to go on food stamps. Last week, I was at the third infantry division while they were deploying to Bosnia. In our area, we have about 2,500 to 3,000 soldiers in Bosnia, as of last week, and I was saying goodbye to them. I asked the colonel how many of these soldiers are married. And he said about 60 percent are married, probably because that is the average right now.

What I do not understand is why the Clinton administration has not recognized that the Army today is an army where we have a lot of families. And this deployment situation of permanent peacekeeping by presence, just having our folks there by occupation, gets to be very, very expensive.

The gentleman and I were here when we debated Bosnia; we were here when the administration said we will only be there for 1 year. Personally speaking, I voted against getting involved in it because I feared we would be there a long

time, and now we are on our 5th year there. Actually, longer than 5 years. As I said good-bye to these young men and women, wondering when they were going to come home, and they are going to come home in 6 months, but who will go after that? In the meantime, how many of them will we lose?

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Well, I can tell the gentleman who is going to go after that, because the 48th brigade of the National Guard of the State of Georgia has been called up, and they are in preparation and training right now to go to Bosnia in March. So they will be going about the time the group the gentleman is talking about is coming home.

The gentleman from Minnesota and I actually went to Bosnia together, and we saw the troops over there and saw the activity going on. And just like my colleague from Georgia, I was opposed to getting involved in that. I failed to see a national security interest of the United States that was in jeopardy. But once we were there, once our troops were committed, then everybody here was absolutely and totally committed, and the gentleman from Minnesota and I had a great visit with those folks over there.

Unfortunately, probably 90 percent of the men and women that we saw serving in Bosnia were either in the reserves or the National Guard, which means that they were called away not just from their families but from their jobs. They are not sure what is going to be there when they get back, and it really is a situation where the OPTEMPO in the military has been called to the brink.

It is something that we are addressing now in the Committee on Armed Services. We are looking at if we have to continue down this path, and gosh knows I hope we will not have to continue being the policemen of the world, but we have to look at increasing the force structure of this country.

I would yield to the gentleman from Minnesota.

□ 2100

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, it was a wonderful trip over there. We cannot help but be proud of the young men and women who serve us in the armed forces and the job that they do, whether it is in Bosnia or Yugoslavia, East Timor, Haiti. We have had so many deployments over the last 8 years that we are just stretching our people far too thin.

I think the other issue we are raising here is the whole issue of burden sharing. Bosnia alone has costs us, as members of the Committee on the Budget, almost \$20 billion now. And it is really hard for us to see any real evidence that we are making any real progress.

The same is true with Yugoslavia. It is time for our allies. We are spending about 3 percent of our gross domestic product on defense. Our European allies are spending an average 1½ percent. That has made our job a whole

lot more difficult in terms of balancing the budget.

I just want to come back to a couple of points that my colleague raised, and I think they really need to be repeated because everybody likes to take credit. It is like the little red hen in baking the bread. Nobody wanted to help grow the wheat. Nobody wanted to help harvest the wheat. Nobody wanted to help grind the wheat. Nobody wanted to help bake the bread. But everybody wants to take credit once the bread has been baked.

If we go back to where we were in 1995 when the President proposed his budget in the spring of 1995, we were looking at deficits of over \$200 billion well into the future. And we came in and said, no, we are going to slow the rate of growth in Federal spending, we are going to eliminate programs, we are going to consolidate programs. We have eliminated over 400 programs, some big ones the Interstate Commerce Commission, some small ones like the Coffee Tasters Commission, some that Americans will not miss, some that most Americans will not miss very much. But the point is we have made enormous progress.

We were accused of wanting to starve children and throw grandma out into the street. We have made enormous progress, and most of it has been done in little changes that we have made along the way and slowed the rate of growth so that this year the Federal budget will grow at a slower rate than the average family budget.

The real goal, as my colleagues are talking about today, and I was listening very carefully up there, the real goal of paying down this debt, I just cannot think of anything better to leave our kids than a debt-free future.

But above and beyond that, I am told by Congressional Budget officers that, if we begin this process of really paying down debt, we will see real interest rates drop by at least one percent. That will save the average American family over \$4,000 a year in interest payments that they are paying on their homes, their mortgages, their credit cards, all the other things that Americans have in terms of debt. And to me that is a huge tax cut.

We need to really think about what it will mean when we get to that point where we really have eliminated the publicly held debt. I think we are at a very important point in history. And I hope that our leadership, the appropriators, the people serving on the conference committees will not be eager to compromise.

I believe that \$1.868 trillion is more than enough to meet the legitimate needs of the Federal Government and those who depend on it. And if we need to spend more in one particular category, if the President says, no, we have got to spend more, whether it is on education or the environment or whatever his particular pet programs are, then we should demand that the President show us where he is going to

pay for that program out of some other area of the budget. I do not think that is too much to ask.

We have come a long ways. We cannot turn back now. I really appreciate what my colleagues have been talking about tonight because I think this is at the heart of what we must do as a Congress, and that is to control the rate of growth in Federal spending, to make certain that we pay down debt; and ultimately I believe we allow families to keep more of what they earn in two ways, first of all with tax cuts and secondly by seeing lower interest rates on their home mortgages and everything else that they own.

So I really appreciate this special order tonight, and I thank my friends from Georgia for having it.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, before the gentleman from Minnesota yields the floor, I wanted to bring up something that, as we work on prescription drug coverage, and it is interesting, the only bill that has passed is a Republican bill, yet as we listen to GORE and the Democrat party, we would think that they have passed five bills and we have not done anything.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would continue to yield, I do not think the President has ever introduced a prescription drug bill. In 8 years, I think the sum total of what this administration has done on prescription drugs is they have refused to enforce the antitrust laws that are on the books. We have seen even bigger mergers of the huge pharmaceutical companies. And then, of course, when seniors try to buy prescription drugs in either Canada or Mexico or Europe via mail or e-mail or some kind of ordering system, the other thing the administration has done is they have sent those seniors threatening letters. And we have copies of those in our office. In fact, I think we have copies on our Web site so my colleagues might want to check it.

So they have never introduced a bill, but they have allowed the big drug companies to merge; and they have not enforced the antitrust laws, and they have threatened seniors. That has been their answer.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, what I think is real important to understand is that in Canada and Mexico they can buy drugs made in America by the same drug companies that we buy from at our local pharmacist and they can buy those same drugs, same dosage for 30 percent less, 40 percent less in one case, 25 percent less; and yet, if they live in Minnesota or New York or Maine and they drive over to a pharmacist and buy them, the Clinton FDA stops them.

Here is an opportunity that, under the Clinton administration we passed NAFTA, which has cost us a lot of jobs in our area, and yet free trade with Canada would mean they should be able to buy things over there; and yet it is the Clinton administration that keeps our seniors from doing that. And

that is something that could affect the cost of prescription drugs right now.

Now, my interest and I think the interest of the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LINDER) and the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS) is that, if we can get our seniors to get lower-cost drugs, there is more competition in the system and more competition will bring the prices down; and so we want the folks in Minnesota and on the border States to get their drugs cheaper from Canada because we may be able to do that also through the Internet. But we also will benefit when the prices come down, and that is why it is in our interest as a Nation.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, from a budget perspective, last year the Federal Government, through the Veterans' Administration and through other programs that are actually run by the Federal Government, we bought about \$5 billion worth of prescription drugs last year.

Now, I estimate if Americans had access, including the VA and Medicaid and medical assistance and some of the other programs we fund, if we had access to drugs at world-market prices, let me give my colleagues one example, Prilosec, a very commonly prescribed drug in the United States for acid reflux disease and ulcers. In the United States the average price for a 30-day supply is now about \$139 a month. That same drug sells in Canada for \$55. It sells in Mexico for \$17.50.

Now, that is just one example. But we believe that you could save easily 30 percent.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman did not have to make this story up, unlike Vice President GORE, who has to absolutely lie about his mother-in-law. The truth is out there. Why not tell the truth?

Mr. GUTKNECHT. The truth is we could save at least \$1.5 billion a year. And when people talk about the prescription drug problem, the problem is that they always talk about the wrong side first; they always talk about coverage. The real problem is price. If people had access to drugs at world-market prices, we would have a much smaller problem dealing with the coverage side.

The good news is I think the congressional leadership, and the Republicans in particular, now understand that if we believe in free markets for textiles, if we believe in free markets for lumber, if we believe in free markets for agricultural products, certainly we ought to have free markets when it comes to pharmaceuticals.

I do not believe in price controls, but I do not believe that the world's best customers should pay the world's highest prices. And that is what is happening today, and it is partly because of the miserable job that the Justice Department has done, the administration, the FDA, and so forth in terms of encouraging more competition.

So that is an issue that has huge budget implications. Because when we

look at Medicare, we look at the VA, we look at how much we are already spending on prescription drugs, if we have access to world-market prices, we will see prices in the United States, in my opinion, drop by at least 30 percent. And next year the estimates are, in the United States, we will spend both from private citizens, insurance companies, the Government, and so forth, we will spend close to \$150 billion on prescription drugs. Thirty percent of \$150 billion is real money.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman hits the core of that issue, too, is that we do not drive those prices down by Government controls; we do not drive those prices down by the Federal Government doing anything other than allowing for competition, promoting competition. That should be the sole function of the Federal Government.

We tend to go in the other direction sometimes, and that just ought not to happen.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, one senior at one of my townhall meetings said it best: if you think prescription drugs are expensive today, just wait until the Federal Government provides them for free.

We have got to deal with the price side first. And then when we do, we can come up with a prescription drug program that encourages competition, that allows markets to work, that gives people choices, that is available, it is affordable, and ultimately will bring down the price of prescription drugs so that people will not be falling through the cracks as they are today.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman bringing that up. We talk about the differences between the Bush and the Gore plan. I think if we look at the Gore plan, and there is a plan, it has never been introduced for 8 years, but suddenly about a month ago the Gore plan had a new prescription drug benefit. I did not know it until I saw an advertisement on there.

Let me ask my colleagues. In fact, I would love anybody to answer. Have my colleagues been sent anything to the office? I mean, we have got New York, Minnesota, Georgia, and Colorado here. Not one office has been sent this allegedly serious proposal. But the Gore plan has one purchaser of prescription drugs. That is the Federal Government.

The Bush plan has eight different options to choose from. The Bush plan they can enroll in at any time in their life. The Gore plan they have to choose at 64½ years old. And if they do not choose then, they are out of luck.

The Bush plan says, we are not going to ensure Bill Gates and Ross Perot because two-thirds of the people out there already have a prescription drug plan; we do not need the universal coverage for everybody. The Gore plan says, no, sir. Ted Turner, Ross Perot, Bill Gates are my kind of guys. I want to make sure they get free prescription

drugs from the truck drivers back home and the coal miners in Tennessee.

And so it is the typical government-mandated, one-size-fits-all, huge Washington-driven entitlement. And that is why I think it should be rejected; and instead of shotgun, we should laser beam our solutions to where the problems really are.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I think our colleague from Georgia (Mr. LINDER) says it best. In many of these issues, it really is about who decides, will it be Washington or will it be the individual. Whether we are talking about education reform, health care reform, prescription drug reform, whatever we are talking about here in Washington, most of it all comes down to who decides. Will it be Washington bureaucrats, or will it be you?

The thing about this side of the aisle is we believe in individuals, and we believe that the individuals can make the best decisions.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. And will make the best decisions.

I want to thank all of my colleagues for participating today. We look forward to continuing to dialogue with our folks on the other side and the White House to, hopefully, get our 90/10 debt pay-down bill signed into law by the President. It is the right thing to do, and it needs to happen.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HAYES). The Chair would remind all Members that although remarks in debate may level criticism against the policies of the Vice President, still remarks in debate must avoid personality and, therefore, may not include personal accusations or characterizations.

□

NIGHTSIDE CHAT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. MCINNIS) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. BOEHLERT).

BOEHLERT LAUDS COURT DECISION ON ONEIDA INDIAN LAND CLAIM

Mr. BOEHLERT. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Colorado for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I have a very important announcement. There has been a Federal court decision today in one of the most highly visible and significant Indian land claims in the country.

Senior Judge Neal McCurn of the Federal Court of the Northern District of New York has denied request by the Oneida Indian Nation and the U.S. Department of Justice to amend a lawsuit in a claim to include 20,000 innocent landowners as defendants.

Let me repeat that.

Judge McCurn has ruled he has denied a request to amend a lawsuit in