

know now that, in 10 years, we will pay down the publicly held national debt, and we will provide some meaningful tax relief to the American people.

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I think it all comes down to what the gentleman said earlier, and that is it comes down to one's view of how this process is supposed to work. The Republican leadership knew before they passed their almost trillion dollar tax cut bill that the President was going to veto it. He told them that. It was passed anyway. And that is fine, that is the process working its will. But once that occurred, then it seems to me that the right thing to do was to realize that a half a loaf, from their point of view, would have been better for the American people than none at all.

And if we come back to a more realistic Federal budget plan that puts a priority on the national debt and that provides about \$377 billion, as we have in our plan, in tax cuts, then we can tell the American people that we have done the people's work; that we have set our Nation on a course of fiscal responsibility and we have taken the good times that we have and the projected surplus and we have allocated it in a way that is going to work for the American people and work to keep this prosperous economy going.

So I hope that this hour has not been spent in vain. I hope our Republican leadership will take a look at the Blue Dog plan, which we have advocated for 2 years now, and perhaps get us back to the point where we can come together and do the job the American people expect us to do, both Democrats and Republicans, and do the right thing. Even though it might not be what everybody wants, it will at least represents a true compromise. And after all, that is what the legislative process is all about.

So I really appreciate the time that we have had here to talk about this issue. And again I thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) for his leadership on this issue on our side of the aisle.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, and will now yield to the gentleman from the 19th District of Illinois (Mr. PHELPS), one of our Blue Puppies, that has now achieved the full rank of Blue Dog in this year.

Mr. PHELPS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. TURNER), and I want to also commend the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. CRAMER) and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. TANNER) and many others. The leadership of the Blue Dog organization has been right on target and made me feel very comfortable in being a part of the membership. I have learned a lot as a new Member in looking at this budget.

And I want to thank the Blue Dogs for being consistent. To me that is very important. My father gave me some advice a long time ago. He said, "Don't

reject an idea just because it is not your own." I think that is what we are coming down to here.

Mr. Speaker, as the budget discussions continue, I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to look at the Blue Dog budget framework as a workable fiscally sound solution. This budget framework shows that it is still possible to responsibly pay down the debt while providing critical funding for education and health care programs.

I am pleased to see that both sides are now focused on paying down the debt, something the Blue Dogs have supported from the very beginning. Under the Blue Dog plan, the debt reduction lockbox would be extended 10 years to save 100 percent of the Social Security and Medicare surpluses, plus half of the on-budget surpluses for debt reduction.

We owe it to our children to not squander the surplus but invest it into their future by paying down what we already owe. At the same time, this budget would suggest that 10 percent of the fiscal year 2001 surplus be divided between tax cuts, BBA relief, and discretionary spending. I have favored some of the tax cuts proposed this year, and I will continue to do so, but we must provide necessary funds for the problems we are now facing in health care and education.

In my district these are critical funds. In my district, for example, education funding is critical to providing our students, especially those with special needs, with the education they need to make it in the real world.

In my district, home health and rural health centers are the only point of access to health care for many people. Funding of these programs and providing them with BBA relief, which is included in the Blue Dog alternative, literally can mean life or death for these programs and the patients they serve.

In 1997, with the Balanced Budget Amendment, we asked our citizens to accept cuts to put us on the path to a fiscally secure future. Well, now we are fiscally responsible and we have a surplus. It is our duty to also use the surplus responsibly by investing in our kids' education and providing access to necessary health care for our citizens. The Blue Dog alternative best meets these goals.

It is not too late to come to agreement on a fiscally sound budget that pays down the debt, gives tax relief, and provides for health and education. I ask my colleagues to use the Blue Dog framework and agreement to come to the end of this budget impasse. I hope that we all are reasonable and will come forward and be sure that we act responsibly on behalf of our citizens.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his contribution.

In closing, I would just say, Mr. Speaker, that we have taken this hour

in good faith, in the spirit of which we have spoken. We believe that we have some ideas worthy of consideration, Mr. Speaker, and we hope that our colleagues will give them their just due.

HUNGER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. NEY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, hunger is an issue that many in America would prefer to ignore, and I perhaps wish I did not have to speak on it. I have spoken on this before and have said many of the things I must repeat again.

The economy is soaring for some. In fact, it is good for most. Unemployment is at a 30-year low. Welfare rolls have been slashed. Still, every day in America, 31 million Americans, 31 million Americans, are either hungry or living under the specter of hunger. The economy is sinking for far too many of our citizens: Those who are hungry.

There is evidence of hunger in 3.6 percent of all households in America. Close to 4 million children are hungry. Fourteen million children, 20 percent of the population of children, live in food insecure homes. In food insecure homes, meals are skipped or the size of the meal is reduced. More than 10 percent of all households in America are food insecure.

Because there is such hunger and food insecurity, there is also infant mortality, growth stunting, iron deficiency, anemia, poor learning, and increased chances for disease. Because there is such hunger and food insecurity, the poor are more likely to remain poor and the hungry more likely to remain hungry.

It seems strange that we must fight for food for those who cannot fight for themselves. It really is time to stop picking on the poor. Less than 3 percent, less than 3 percent of the budget goes to feed the hungry. It is for those reasons that Congress should, Congress must pass hunger relief legislation. If we do, we can achieve several important goals: We will build on the bipartisan progress we made in 1998 with the passage of the Agriculture Research Act. In that act we restored some benefits for legal immigrants.

In legislation I have co-sponsored in this Congress, we restore food stamp benefits for all immigrants, including the working poor, families with young children, and needy seniors. With the Hunger Relief Act of 1999, we also seek to update the food stamp rules.

We change the vehicle limit so that families can retain a reliable car without losing food stamp benefits. We change the shelter cap, raising it from \$275 to now \$340 over the next 4 years, and then we index it to inflation. Finally, the Hunger Relief Act authorizes another \$100 million over 5 years for commodity purchases and food distribution.

With the will, we can pass this act this Congress. We cannot move from poverty to progress without a fair chance for all. We cannot prepare our children for the future if we insist upon policies that relegate them to the past. We cannot ensure the quality of life for every citizen if we fail to provide programs for all of our citizens. And we cannot protect and preserve our communities if we do not adequately provide the most basic commodity for living: Something to eat.

Nutritional programs are essential for the well-being of millions of our citizens. The disadvantaged, our children, the elderly, and the disabled, these are groups of people who often cannot provide for themselves and need help for their existence. They do not ask for much: Just a little help to sustain them through the day; just a little help to keep children alert in classes and adults to be productive in their jobs or as they search for jobs.

The Hunger Relief Act provides that help. Food for all is worth fighting for. And as we end this Congress, we have a chance to change this shocking and the scandalous situation. I am so proud to have joined 181 of my colleagues in the House and 38 Senators, Republicans and Democrats, in support of legislation that focuses on food and takes notice of this Nation's nutritional needs.

The Hunger Relief Act, H.R. 3192 in the House and S. 1805 in the Senate will help the one in ten families in our Nation who are affected by hunger. Mr. Speaker, let us pass this act before we end this Congress.

VICE PRESIDENT'S ECONOMIC PLAN

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

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, a few of my colleagues will soon be joining me and we will be spending the next hour discussing the details of the Vice President's economic plan. Certainly during that period of time we will have a broad overview, but at this point I would like to just focus very narrowly on one aspect of the Vice President's plan.

My colleagues may recall, Mr. Speaker, that the Vice President was one of many voices that urged the President of the United States to veto the marriage penalty tax relief that was passed by this Congress and sent to the President. Soon after the President vetoed the marriage penalty tax relief, the Vice President announced that he would give marriage penalty relief by doubling the standard deduction.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is probably worth our while to realize what this means exactly in terms of the Vice President's claim that it is marriage penalty tax relief; certainly what it means by way of comparison with the

marriage penalty tax relief that was granted by this Congress and vetoed by the President.

The first thing my colleagues should realize is that in the congressional bill, written by the Republicans and passed on to the President, vetoed by the President, all married couples, irrespective of their filing status, received relief from the unfair marriage penalty. The Vice President's proposal that he now outlines only gives relief to those people who do not itemize their taxes.

If a couple owns a home and decides to deduct their mortgage interest, they will get no marriage penalty relief under the Vice President's plan. If a couple gives to their church and deducts charitable contributions, they get no marriage penalty relief under the Vice President's plan.

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If you, your spouse, or your child is ill and you deduct your skyrocketing medical bills, you get no marriage penalty relief under the Vice President's plan. If you or your spouse work at home and deduct the cost of a home office, you get no marriage penalty relief under the Vice President's plan. And, Mr. Speaker, if you jump through hoops to become eligible for one of the new credits that the Vice President has proposed, complicating our Tax Code even further than it is now, than the Vice President will not give you relief from the unfair marriage penalty. And, Mr. Speaker, that is wrong.

Mr. Speaker, that is just the beginning of the serious concern I have with the details of the Vice President's plan.

Let me say, Mr. Speaker, it is a commonplace observation in this town that the devil is in the details. Arme's axiom is, if you make a deal with the devil, you are the junior partner. And I am about to demonstrate in this next hour that indeed the devil that we do not want to make a deal with is in the details of the Vice President's plan.

Let us take a look at the big picture first. The Vice President would spend the on-budget surplus, he would rob the Social Security trust fund, and he would provide a measly tax cut designed to manipulate behavior instead of giving meaningful tax relief.

Madam Speaker, one of the things that we are very proud of in this Congress, one of the things that we have been able to do, thanks primarily to the success of the American people in creating an enormous economic success story here in America and the revenues that have accrued to the Government out of our economic success, is that we have managed to stop the raid on Social Security.

Not only do we set aside 100 percent of all Social Security tax dollars that people find in their payroll stubs as FICA tax, 100 percent of all Medicare tax surpluses set aside by this Congress, thus ending the 40-year raid on Social Security and Medicare; but we have even managed in this Congress to

set aside a large portion of the on-budget budget surplus.

What is the on-budget budget surplus? That is the part of the budget surplus that accrues to the Government from your Social Security taxes, not from your Medicare taxes, but from your income taxes. So that we are now setting 90 percent of all budget surplus aside for debt reduction.

The Vice President's plan would take all of that income tax surplus, which we call on-budget surplus, and he would spend it. But worse than that, he would renew the old practice, a practice that should be forgotten, of robbing from the Social Security trust fund for new risky spending schemes that we will talk about later.

At the same time, he would provide a bureaucratic government-run prescription drug plan that is not guaranteed to bring the cost of drugs down. Indeed, Madam Speaker, the Vice President's one-size-fits-all, you-must-join-the-Government plan threatens to force the price of prescription drugs up.

Let us address his spending plans first.

According to Vice President GORE's numbers, he would increase Federal spending by about \$900 billion through the year 2010. However, the Senate budget committee shows a much higher price tag. They added up the numbers and found that the Vice President would spend \$2.1 trillion of new spending and he would not stop there.

Think of it this way: the Vice President's plan is 191 pages. That means that each page of his book would cost taxpayers an amazing \$18.4 billion per page. It means that for every dollar by which the Vice President would cut taxes, he would spend \$6.75.

If you look at the details, Madam Speaker, we find that Vice President GORE dramatically underestimates the cost of his new retirement entitlement program built on top of the Social Security program. That is not new. This has been a part of our problem historically in the past with Democrat Congresses that created new mandatory spending programs and dramatically underestimated their cost.

The Vice President says his new retirement program, which is very similar to the Clinton universal savings account, which was a trial balloon which the Clinton administration floated until it popped, that this would cost \$200 billion over 10 years.

But an analysis by Dr. John Colgen of Stanford University shows that, if everyone eligible to participate in it, it would cost \$160 billion in the first year alone. The Vice President says his plan would cost \$200 billion over 10 years. Professor Colgen of Stanford University says, if everybody eligible participated, it would be \$160 billion for the first year alone.

The Vice President mistakenly calls this brand new massive retirement spending program a tax cut.

True enough, it would be run through the IRS and that would give this agency still more power and control over