

115 months of straight economic expansion, the longest in the history of the United States.

Governor Bush may not remember what it was like back in the old days when we would get 12 months or so of economic expansion. But that is what America truly was like.

Look at what happened to the inflation rate during that same period of time.

In 1980, the inflation rate was over 12 percent. Then it went down at the end of the administration of Jimmy Carter. Of course, it went down and it stayed down. But we have kept the inflation rate at the lowest sustained level since 1965.

These things don't happen easily or automatically. Those who think Governor Bush can come to it with little or no experience and keep it going have to answer some questions. Will he be able to do as we have done in the last 8 years—create 22 million new jobs? His father created 2½ million jobs during his 4 years; President Reagan, 16 million during his 8 years. Twenty-two million is a record, and it is a record of which we are proud. It means people have a chance.

But we can see Presidents who came on board such as former President Bush who really didn't have good luck when it came to job creation and getting people back to work.

Take a look at Federal spending.

The Republicans criticize Democrats as big spenders. Look what has happened to Federal spending as a percentage of our gross domestic product. It has gone to one of the lowest levels since 1966. We have seen Federal spending heading down and we are being criticized for being big spenders. The fact is, we have not been. Just the opposite is true: For the people often left behind, the lowest poverty rate in 20 years; African Americans and Hispanic Americans with the highest employment rates in modern memory; improvement in education scores, an indication that everybody gets a chance to improve in this country.

The overall surplus we have seen generated is the largest in our history: \$237 billion under the Clinton-Gore administration. Look at the red ink under Presidents Reagan and Bush in the early years of Clinton-Gore and how we turned the corner. There are those who think that will continue, but it isn't true. If we go the wrong way on critical decisions, we will pay the price.

The American Academy of Actuaries came out with their report last week. They took a look at Governor Bush's proposal for Social Security and they said we would return to Federal budget deficits around 2015 under George W. Bush's proposal. This group, which is nonpartisan, and is supposed to know basically more than most of us when it comes to accounting and actuarial practice, concluded that Governor Bush's plan to cut taxes and divert Social Security payroll tax for individual accounts would make it all but impos-

sible to eliminate the publicly held national debt.

There is the choice, America. A choice for the next 4 years is whether we will continue to make sure that we invest in America, keep the economy moving forward, use fiscal discipline and fiscal conservatism, if you will, to make sure we pay down the national debt. I don't believe, nor does Vice President GORE, for that matter, that we should risk the Social Security system by taking \$1 trillion out of it, something that Governor Bush couldn't even explain in the last debate. How do you take \$1 trillion out of Social Security and then go ahead and spend the \$1 trillion, except at the expense of Social Security recipients? Are you going to cut the benefits? Are you going to increase their payroll taxes? Are you going to change the retirement age?

All of these things are options that none of us want to face. If you take an approach, and he suggested you may have no other alternative, you may find yourselves battling away at a stock market which looks a lot like the roller coaster at Coney Island in Senator MOYNIHAN's home State.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. COLLINS). The time of the Senator is expired.

The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Massachusetts, Mr. KENNEDY, be recognized for 30 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

WORK OF THE SENATE

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, I thank the Senator from Nevada. I commend my friend and colleague, the Senator from Illinois, in raising these issues. I commend him because he has presented the facts to the Senate.

We never had an opportunity to vote on the 1996 Immigration Act. To represent that we did is not stating clearly the facts. That was wrapped into a conference report on an entirely different appropriation, which was a take-it-or-leave-it, after the legislation passed, I believe, 97-3, with strong bipartisan support, and it was after days of hearing in the Senate that the Republicans took that and added these provisions, some provisions which the Senator has mentioned.

This figure of 4 million is a traditional way of distorting and misrepresenting a position, and then disagreeing with it. That is poppycock. It is red herring. The Senator from Utah ought to know better than that because that is completely inaccurate.

I can understand the frustration that many feel about this issue, and I commend the President for attempting to try and deal with it.

When we had this Latino Fairness Act, two prominent Republicans, the Senator from Florida and the chairman of the immigration committee, made

statements in favor of the position outlined by the Senator from Illinois. They were prepared. They understood that there may have been differences here, but they spoke to it.

The President is in a commendable position. I thank him for his leadership in this. I again thank the Senator from Illinois for bringing this matter to the attention of the Senate. I am very hopeful that we will stay the course on this until we get some action on this, another proposal that has a moratorium on the deportation of individuals, which has been passed through the House on the suspension calendar which addresses one of the regrettable aspects of the 1996 act. That has the bipartisan support of Chairman HYDE of the Judiciary Committee, and LAMAR SMITH from the immigration committee, which virtually passed unanimously in the House. I am hopeful we will pass that, as well.

Halloween is here. I am watching the clock that is over the Senate right now. It has not been corrected. I don't know whether the goblins are out here, as well, but Halloween is here. While the Nation observes this occasion only once a year, for this Republican Congress, every day is Halloween. This is the Halloween Congress: lavishing treats on the wealthy and cruel tricks on average families.

If he is elected, Governor Bush will borrow the idea and have a year-round Halloween White House in which powerful special interests hold sway and working families are left out and left behind. He said no to working families in Texas and he wants to say no to average Americans for 4 more years this time from 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. He wants to say no to Social Security, no to Medicare, no to a fair prescription drug benefit for senior citizens, no to the Patients' Bill of Rights, no to improving the public schools, no to health care for uninsured children, no to fair tax cuts for average families, no to fighting hate crimes, no to fairness for lawful immigrants, no to gun safety laws.

There is no clearer example of how our Republican friends have kowtowed to powerful special interests than the tax bill before the Senate. Rather than meet the urgent priorities of the American people, Republicans have spent the past 2 weeks huddled behind closed doors to produce a quarter-trillion-dollar tax package tilted overwhelmingly toward the powerful and not toward the average families.

In fact, the top 5 percent of taxpayers will receive a greater share of the tax breaks under this Republican tax scheme than the bottom 80 percent of all taxpayers combined. There is little to distinguish this plan from the previous discredited proposals by the Republican leadership in Congress and by George W. Bush. In many ways the items in this package are even more cynical.

The Republicans know that millions of Americans are deeply concerned

about the lack of health insurance for low- and middle-income families. So this bill lowers the cost of health insurance for wealthier people who are already insured. Madam President, 95 percent of the people who will benefit under this bill in terms of the health insurance benefits are individuals who are already insured, not any expansion for those who have no health insurance today.

Republicans know that millions of Americans are concerned about saving enough for retirement, so this bill fattens the pension opportunities available to the highest level corporate executives. Republicans know that millions of children and working families are having trouble feeding their families even in this time of prosperity. So this bill increases the tax breaks that corporations can claim for three-martini lunches, dinners, and other entertainment.

Republicans know that millions of families struggle to care for elderly or disabled family members at home, so their tax bill lowers the cost of luxury nursing facilities for wealthy families.

Millions of low-wage workers are depending on Congress to raise the minimum wage this year before we adjourn. But Republicans seem to care so little about the minimum wage that they have repealed it for 6 months of next year in their tax bill. It was, apparently, an inadvertent mistake, or perhaps a Freudian slip. But if they had worked with Democrats and shown us the provision, we could have prevented such an embarrassing mistake. An increase in the minimum wage may be an afterthought for the Republican leadership, but it means food on the table and clothes for the children for the 12 million workers who benefit. To eliminate the minimum wage, even for 6 months, would be a disaster for these families.

Here we are in the final hours of this Congress and still we have been denied the opportunity to even vote whether this body thinks we should vote for a 50-cent increase in the minimum wage today—which is now \$5.15 an hour—and 50 cents next year, at the time we have the greatest economic expansion in the history of this country.

On the other hand, under Republican leadership the Congress raised its salary by \$4,800 last year and again by \$3,600 this year. Congress made sure nothing got in the way. Congressional pay was not eliminated for 6 months. Congress did not say Congressional salaries would be increased only if accompanied by \$100 billion in tax breaks. Isn't that interesting? Our Republican leaders have told us yes, you can have raises, rather than the people who are going to be affected by an increase in the minimum wage if we have \$73 billion in tax breaks. We did not have that kind of requirement when we increased our own benefits, but evidently for the hardest working families, many of those who have two or three jobs to try to make ends meet, that is the block that is put in front of them.

Madam President, 535 Senators and Representatives received a raise without a hitch. The 12 million Americans who would receive a raise in the minimum wage deserve the same. It is a children's issue, a families issue, a civil rights issue.

I hope this Republican Congress will act to pass the minimum wage before adjourning this year.

Mr. REID. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. KENNEDY. Yes, I will be happy to.

Mr. REID. Isn't it true, all over this country there are State and minimum wage laws that are much higher than \$5.15 an hour? It is not as if Congress is breaking some new ground. The fact is, in several States they have a higher minimum wage than we are trying to advocate; is that not true?

Mr. KENNEDY. The Senator is correct. In a number of communities we have living wage regions, in many of the major cities of this country, which have been successful. But there are those, including Governor Bush, whose position is to say the States ought to be able to opt out on the minimum wage. When you realize the minimum wage in the State of Texas is \$3.35 an hour, when we have seen the prosperity which is across this country, that raises serious questions about the real interest in any working families.

I want to take the time remaining to talk about two public policy areas, first on education and then on health care. If Governor Bush's record in Texas is any indication, average Americans, who work day after day to make ends meet, will be an afterthought in a Bush administration.

The Republican Congress says he has the answers to education. He calls his record in Texas an education miracle. But if you look at the record, it is more of an education mirage than an education miracle. Under Governor Bush, in 1998, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, Texas ranks 45th in the Nation in high school completion rates; 71 percent of high school dropouts in Texas are minorities; Hispanic students in Texas drop out at more than twice the rate of white students in the State. So if education is the biggest civil rights issue in America, as Governor Bush proclaimed at the Presidential debates, he flunked the test in Texas.

Last August, the College Boards reported that nationally, from 1997 to the year 2000, SAT scores have increased. But in Texas, they have decreased. In 1997, Texas was 21 points below the SAT national average. By 2000, the gap had grown by 26 points.

Then, last Thursday, Governor Bush heard more bad news. The Rand Corporation released an education bombshell that raises serious questions about the validity of gains in student achievements in Texas claimed by the Governor. The Rand bombshell was all the more embarrassing because in August Governor Bush said:

Our State has done the best, not measured by us, but measured by the Rand Corporation who take an objective look at how States are doing when it comes to education.

Those are the Governor's words. Clearly, at that time Governor Bush trusted the conclusions made by the Rand Corporation because he was referring to a Rand report that looks at scores in Texas from 1990 to 1996. In fact, Senator HUTCHISON cited those findings on the floor of the Senate on Thursday.

But most of the years covered by the earlier Rand report were before Bush became Governor. The new Rand report released earlier this week analyzes the scores from 1994 to 1998, when George W. Bush was the Governor. The achievement gap in Texas is not closing, it is widening. What is the Governor's solution? Test, test, tests and more tests.

In August, Governor Bush said:

Without comprehensive regular testing, without knowing if children are really learning, accountability is a myth and standards are just slogans.

We all know tests are an important indication of student achievement, but the Rand study questions the validity of the Texas State test because Governor Bush's education program was teaching to the test instead of genuinely helping children to learn.

These are the results. We find out the objective standards, whether we take it from the Rand Corporation or the National Center for Education Statistics. When it was favorable to Texas, it was quoted ad infinitum by strong supporters of the Governor. But, those successes applied to the education policies that were developed prior to the time the Governor became Governor.

If we want a true solution to improving education, we should look at the success of States such as North Carolina, which is improving education the right way: Investing in schools, improving teacher quality, expanding afterschool programs—all in order to produce better results for students. The Bush plan mandates more tests for children, but it does nothing to ensure that schools actually improve and children actually learn.

We know immediate help for low-performing schools is essential. We know we can turn around failing schools when the Federal Government, States, parents, and local schools work together as partners to provide the needed investments.

In North Carolina, low-performing schools are given technical assistance from special State teams who provide targeted support to turn around low-performing schools. In the 1997-1998 school year, 15 North Carolina schools received intensive help from these State-assisted teams. In August 1998, the State reported most of these schools achieved exemplary growth and not one school remained in the low-performing category. Last year, 11 North Carolina schools received similar help; 9 met or exceeded their targets.

That is the kind of aid to education that works—not just tests, but realistic action to bring about realistic change for students' education. And, correspondingly, the test scores for the students in North Carolina have risen 10 points above the national average during this period.

The Democratic proposal to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act incorporate the proven approaches that have demonstrated better results for children. But the Republican leadership has blocked any opportunity to debate education. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, for the first time in 35 years, will not be acted on by Congress.

The Vice President, AL GORE, supports programs to improve public schools which have been proven effective. The best example we have is North Carolina. Those programs are tried and tested and demonstrated to be successful. That is what we believe ought to be done in the future for public education in this country. Yet those programs that have been tried and tested in the State of Texas are not improving education for children. Education is a prime issue for families, and we ought to look at the results. When you look at them carefully, you have to realize that what has been outlined as an educational miracle by the Governor just does not measure up—it's just an education mirage.

Instead of taking steps that will work, Governor Bush abandons the low-performing schools. He proposes a private school voucher plan that drains needed resources from troubled schools and traps low-income children in them. In the Vietnam war, it was said we had to destroy some villages in order to save them. That is what Governor Bush has in store for failing schools: a Vietnam war strategy that will destroy them instead of save them.

Parents want smaller class sizes where teachers can maintain order and give one-to-one attention students need to learn. Parents want a qualified teacher in every classroom in America. Parents want modern schools that are safe learning environments for their children. GAO found that \$112 billion was necessary for our schools to meet health and safety standards and environmental standards, to make critical repairs, and to ensure they are wired for modern technologies. That is why we want strong support for our school modernization and construction program that the Republican leadership has consistently opposed.

Here we are 4 weeks into the next fiscal year. Republicans have said that education is their top priority, but instead, they have made education their last priority.

Parents and students alike want an increase in Pell grants to help young people afford the college education they need to compete in the new economy.

The vast majority of Americans want us to address these challenges, and AL

GORE and the Democrats in Congress will do just that. We will continue to fight hard for education priorities that parents and local schools are demanding.

There is much good news about education across the nation. More students are taking the SATs so they can gain entrance into college. We see these numbers going up every year.

More and more students are taking advanced math and science classes in precalculus, calculus, and physics. We know there are schools in some parts of the country where the children cannot even read and write an essay. We ought to be doing something about it. The Republicans condemn those schools, but they have no plan to improve them.

Finally, the SAT math scores are the highest in 30 years. The SATs are taken by young people who want to go on to college. Those who are taking math now—many of the children who are taking the advanced courses are going to do better. That is what we want, isn't it? We want all these indicators to go in the right direction—better results for children.

As we come into these final weeks, parents ought to look at the Members of Congress, the Members of the Senate, and the Presidential candidates and where they stand on education. Democrats and AL GORE stand for an investment in children that will produce better results: smaller class sizes, a qualified teacher in every classroom in America in 4 years, a strong downpayment on meeting the nation's school modernization and construction needs, more afterschool programs to keep children safe and out of trouble and give them extra time for learning, too.

We should support these policies to improve public schools, and we should oppose policies by the Republican leadership and Governor Bush to abandon public schools. The nation's children deserve no less.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, few issues are of greater concern to American families than quality, affordable health care. Americans want an end to HMO abuses. They want good health insurance coverage. They want a prescription drug benefit for senior citizens under Medicare. They want to preserve and strengthen Medicare, so that Medicare will be there for both today's senior citizens and tomorrow's senior citizens. And they want these priorities not only for themselves and their loved ones but for every American, because they know that good health care should be a basic right for all.

The choice in this election is clear on health care—and it is not just a choice between different programs. It is also a choice based on who can be trusted to do the right thing for the American people. AL GORE's record and his pro-

posals are clear. He has been deeply involved in health care throughout his career. The current administration has made significant progress in improving health care in a variety of ways—from expanding health insurance for children to protecting Medicare for seniors. He has consistently stood for patients and against powerful special interests.

AL GORE has laid out a constructive program that is consistent with his solid record. He is for expanding insurance coverage to all Americans, starting with children and their parents. He is for a strong Patients' Bill of Rights to end abuses by HMOs. He has a sensible plan for adding prescription drug coverage to Medicare. He will fight to preserve Medicare, without unacceptable changes designed to undermine Medicare and force senior citizens into HMOs and private insurance plans.

George W. Bush's approach is very different. His proposals are deeply flawed. But even worse than the specifics of his proposals is his failure to come clean with the American people about his record in Texas or about his own proposals.

On health care, George Bush doesn't just have a credibility gap. He has a credibility chasm.

He has consistently stood with the powerful against the people. He refuses to take on the drug companies—or the insurance companies—or the HMOs. His budget plan puts tax cuts for the wealthy ahead of every other priority, and leaves no room for needed investments in American families. On health care, his values are not the values of the American people.

On the issue of the Patients' Bill of Rights, George Bush said in the third debate that he supports a national Patients' Bill of Rights. He said he wanted all people covered. He said that he was in favor of a patient's right to sue, as provided under Texas law. He said he brought Republicans and Democrats together in the State of Texas to pass a Patients' Bill of Rights.

That's what he said, but it is not true. Governor Bush knows his record on health care can't stand the light of day. So on national TV, he patently deceived the American people about his record, hoping no one would notice, or else hoping people would give him a pass because he didn't know any better and simply spouted what his spin doctors had given him.

But the truth has a way of coming to the surface. Here is what he did on the Patients' Bill of Rights.

He vetoed the first Patients' Bill of Rights passed in Texas. He fought to make the second bill as narrow and limited as possible. He was so opposed to the provision allowing patients to sue their HMOs that he refused to sign the final bill, allowing it to become law without his signature. That is not a record that recommends him for national office to any citizen concerned about a strong, effective Patients' Bill