

to act in a way that genuinely responds to this concern. What's more, the bill in its current form will almost certainly provoke a presidential veto.

Madam President, we have been down this road before. Both sides agree on an issue that needs to be addressed and then allow a partisan squabble to prevent us from getting it done. The American people did not send us here to spend all of our time arguing over our differences. They sent us here—and I came here—to find the common ground on which we agree.

Now that the bankruptcy reform bill has passed the Senate, I urge my colleagues to work these issues out in conference. Let's begin the year focused not on what divides us but what unites us in the interests of America's working families.

Madam President, I want to also take a moment to discuss the Hatch Amendment that is now part of this legislation. While I believe that the methamphetamine provisions of this amendment are good and something I could support, I voted against this amendment last year for I do not support the voucher language contained in this amendment. I do not support diverting needed resources from our public schools for voucher proposals. Deserting our public schools is not the answer to the problem. I believe we need greater flexibility and greater accountability in our nation's schools. This voucher language is of great concern to me. I sincerely hope that my colleagues will do the right thing and remove the voucher language from this bill during conference.

SAVINGS FOR WORKING FAMILIES ACT OF 2000

Mr. ABRAHAM. Madam President, this week, I joined with my good friends, Senator LIEBERMAN and Senator SANTORUM, to introduce the Savings for Working Families Act of 2000. This important legislation would enable low-income working Americans to increase their savings and build assets, thus allowing them to enter and become a contributing part of America's economic mainstream and benefit from its unprecedented period of economic growth.

Right now, despite the fact that the net worth of American families has increased dramatically over recent years, the net worth of families with incomes below \$25,000 per year has actually decreased. As many as 20 percent of American families are "unbanked"—meaning that they do not have either a checking or a savings account.

This disparity has had a severe and damaging affect not only on the ability of lower-income Americans to obtain financial assets but it has drastically reduced the chances of the working poor to achieve upper, or even middle class status. Even more distressing is the impact this disparity has had on children and minorities: one-third of all American households, and 60 per-

cent of African-American households, have zero or negative net financial assets and 40 percent of all white children, and a staggering 73 percent of all Black children, grow up in households with zero or negative net financial assets.

The lack of financial assets creates almost insurmountable obstacles against purchasing a home, starting a small business or investing in a post-secondary education—all investments which would enable these families to better their economic status and fully participate in the American dream, a dream which should be available to all American's willing to put forth the effort and initiative.

And, Madam President, providing economic opportunity to all Americans is not only the right thing to do morally, but it is the right thing to do economically. Not only will this legislation empower our lower-income working Americans but it will benefit the entire society in the form of new businesses, new jobs, increased earnings, greater tax revenue, reduced welfare expenditures and a higher national savings rate. Case-in-point, Mr. President, IDAs yield over \$5 for every \$1 invested.

Simply put, Madam President, without productive assets such as a home, a college education or a business upon which to build a successful financial future, the working poor may continue to work but they will also continue to remain poor.

The legislation we are introducing today, the Savings for Working Families Act of 2000, recognizes the need to invest in the working poor: empower them with the ability to build assets, own a piece of their neighborhood and achieve wealth.

Specifically, this legislation would establish Individual Development Accounts for poorer Americans, through which account holders can deposit any discretionary earned income and their Earned Income Tax Credit refund and have up to \$500 of their savings matched, each year, by a financial institution. A tax credit would be made available to financial institutions and for investment in qualified non-profits administering qualified IDA programs, in order to provide incentives to match, dollar-for-dollar, IDA account savings, up to \$500 per person per year.

In order to promote asset building, the matched savings accounts would be restricted to buying a first home, receiving post-secondary education or training, or starting a small business. In addition, account holders would participate in classes designed to increase their financial literacy and better prepare them for full and successful participation in the mainstream economy.

Madam President, I am also pleased to note that Congress has already recognized the important contributions that IDAs make to our communities and our economy in several important ways. In 1996, Congress included in the 1996 welfare overhaul law, a provision

allowing states to include IDAs in their Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)—welfare-to-work—plans. Since then, 28 states have included IDAs in their state TANF plans, 27 states have passed some form of IDA legislation, and five more states have IDA legislation pending. In addition, Congress established the Assets for Independence Act in 1998, which provided \$125 million over 5 years for IDA demonstration programs. This Act is expected to reach an additional 30,000 to 40,000 working-poor Americans by 2003.

Last summer, the Senate tax bill included a provision, similar to this bill, which would also have established tax incentives to encourage financial institutions to match the savings of lower-income account holders. I feel privileged to have voted for the tax bill, which included many pro-family and pro-community provisions such as the establishment of the Individual Development Accounts.

Lastly, I am proud to be the lead sponsor of comprehensive bi-partisan and bi-cameral community development and renewal legislation, the American Community Renewal Act, which includes IDAs as a means by which communities can help themselves. Please allow me to take this opportunity and thank Senators LIEBERMAN and SANTORUM for their continued support and effort of IDAs and the American Community Renewal Act.

In closing, Madam President, the Savings for Working Families Act of 2000 provides a common sense long-term solution by providing working lower-income Americans the education and the tools by which they gain the financial know-how necessary to succeed in today's economy.

It is important to recognize that achieving family development, neighborhood revitalization and community resurgence begins by empowering people to help themselves—this legislation provides this opportunity. I am looking forward to working with my colleagues this session to ensure the passage of the Savings for Working Families Act into law.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Madam President, at the close of business Friday, February 4, 2000, the Federal debt stood at \$5,691,096,297,325.05 (Five trillion, six hundred ninety-one billion, ninety-six million, two hundred ninety-seven thousand, three hundred twenty-five dollars and five cents).

One year ago, February 4, 1999, the Federal debt stood at \$5,584,640,000,000 (Five trillion, five hundred eighty-four billion, six hundred forty million).

Fifteen years ago, February 4, 1985, the Federal debt stood at \$1,672,705,000,000 (One trillion, six hundred seventy-two billion, seven hundred five million).

Twenty-five years ago, February 4, 1975, the Federal debt stood at

\$487,665,000,000 (Four hundred eighty-seven billion, six hundred sixty-five million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$5 trillion—\$5,203,431,297,325.05 (Five trillion, two hundred three billion, four hundred thirty-one million, two hundred ninety-seven thousand, three hundred twenty-five dollars and five cents) during the past 25 years.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session, the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

REPORT TO THE CONGRESS ON THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY WITH RESPECT TO TERRORISTS WHO THREATEN TO DISRUPT THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT—PM 83

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

To the Congress of the United States:

As required by section 401(c) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1641(c), and section 204(c) of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), 50 U.S.C. 1703(c), I transmit herewith a 6-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process that was declared in Executive Order 12947 of January 23, 1995.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON.

THE WHITE HOUSE, February 7, 2000.

REPORT TO THE CONGRESS ON THE FISCAL YEAR 2001 BUDGET—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT—PM 84

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was referred jointly, pursuant to the order of January 30, 1975, to the Committees on Appropriations and the Budget.

To the Congress of the United States:

The 2001 Budget, which I am submitting to you with this message, is the fourth balanced budget of my Administration. This budget upholds my policy

of fiscal discipline and promises new opportunity for our Nation.

We have made great progress in the last seven years, rejecting the fiscal disarray of an earlier era and in its place, asserting a steadfast commitment to live within our means, balance the budget, and uphold fiscal discipline. As a result, we have created the conditions for unprecedented prosperity. The longest peacetime economic expansion in American history has produced more than 20 million new jobs. Unemployment has hit its lowest level in a generation. Today, more Americans own their own homes than ever before in our Nation's history.

Our success in reversing what once seemed to be uncontrollable growth in the Federal budget deficit has created more than prosperity. We have restored to America a spirit of purpose and confidence. This is a rare moment in history. Few nations are blessed with a combination of economic prosperity and social stability at home and with the security of a relatively peaceful world. It is time to make the most of this moment of promise to extend prosperity to all corners of our Nation.

My first budget of the new century is built upon a commitment to expanding opportunity, promoting responsibility, and building community. It includes my New Markets Initiative, which relies on public and private sector cooperation to spur economic development in areas of our Nation that have not yet fully benefited from this wave of prosperity. It includes an expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit to lift more hard-pressed working families out of poverty. It expands health insurance coverage to more uninsured low-income children and extends this coverage to their hard-working parents.

Because education is fundamental to creating opportunity, my budget contains resources to prepare the next generation for the future with new and expanded efforts to improve the quality of our schools, prepare our students for college, and make college more accessible. It includes efforts to narrow the digital divide, the gap that separates those who have access to information technology and those who do not, so that all will be equipped with the technological tools they need to succeed. It also includes a science and technology initiative to lay the foundation for new scientific breakthroughs.

This budget responds to the pressing needs of today and builds an America of the future by making our Nation debt free by 2013. To be prepared for the retirement of the baby boom generation, my budget also provides a framework to extend the life of the Social Security and Medicare trust funds, while modernizing Medicare with a needed prescription drug benefit.

This budget uses the same straightforward approach of relying on conservative assumptions, as have all the budgets of my Administration. This conservative approach has built confidence in our budgets, because when

unforeseen results have materialized, an inevitable development in forecasting, they have always brought good news. In turn, reversing recent trends, my 2001 Budget builds on the tradition of straightforward budgets to meet the pressing needs of today in a balanced plan that adheres to the principles of fiscal discipline and debt reduction. This budget also maintains a strict set of budget rules upholding our long commitment to fiscal discipline, which has sustained the conditions for our economy to flourish.

The 2001 Budget continues to project that the Federal budget will remain in surplus for many decades to come, provided that a responsible fiscal policy holds course, to foster sustained economic growth. Our challenge now, in this era of surplus, is to make balanced choices to use our resources to meet the pressing needs of today, and the needs of generations to come.

BUILDING ON THE SUCCESS OF OUR FISCAL DISCIPLINE

When I took office in 1993, the current strength of our economy seemed beyond possibility. At that point, both the Federal budget deficit and the national debt had exploded, threatening our economic future. The costs of massive Federal borrowing drove interest rates up, incomes were stagnant for all but the most well off, and the economy had barely grown during the prior four years. The Nation needed a new course, and we worked hard to secure the passage of legislation, with the support of Democrats in Congress, to get the economy moving again.

My three-part economic strategy, built upon reducing the deficit, investing in the American people, and engaging the international economy yielded results. The budget deficit quickly began to drop from its peak of \$290 billion, and in 1997, we pressed ahead with our deficit reduction efforts as Congress passed the Balanced Budget Act on a bipartisan basis to finish the job. Four years ahead of schedule, the budget reached balance and is projected this year to produce its third surplus in a row. We have started to pay down the national debt and are on a path to make the Nation debt free by 2013 for the first time since 1835.

Throughout the past seven years, my Administration has been committed to creating opportunity for all Americans, demanding responsibility from all Americans, and strengthening the American community. The crime rate, which had tripled during the previous three decades, continues to fall and crime is down in every region of the Nation. We have reformed the welfare system, and more than seven million Americans in the past seven years have made the transition from welfare to work.

Most of all, the prosperity and opportunity of our time offers us a great responsibility—to take action to ensure that Social Security is there for the elderly and the disabled, while ensuring