

them: We don't want a Patients' Bill of Rights. We are making a lot of money under the current system. We don't want the doctors and the nurses to make medical decisions. We want businesspeople to make them based on profits. The pharmaceutical industry has told them they don't want a prescription drug benefit to help the elderly and the disabled pay for drugs they need to survive. When it comes to the minimum wage, some people in the business community have said: We don't want to pay anything more than \$5.15 an hour. And we don't care what impact it has on the employees.

That is the state of play that reflects the values and reflects the choice the American people will have in this coming election as to whether they want to see the Republican majority continue in Congress and stop this basic legislation so important to every American family.

Mrs. BOXER. Will my friend yield on that point?

Mr. DURBIN. I am happy to yield.

Mrs. BOXER. Again, I thank my friend for connecting the dots. To those Americans who say there is no difference between the parties, there are no issues in this election, that it is a matter of who has the best smile, I say that is not what it is about.

It is about issues that impact millions and millions of Americans; 30,000 Americans die every year of gunshots. My friend pointed out that about 13 a day of those are children—children. The Democrats are saying we need sensible gun laws, and our Republican friends are saying we don't need anything, just hang it up in the conference committee and say a few words here and let's move on. We will not let that issue die, if you will, nor the Patients' Bill of Rights and prescription drugs. Again, it is about millions of people.

What always fascinates me is my friends on the Republican side—oh, they are tough on law and order. And I agree with them. I am as tough as they come. I will support the death penalty for heinous crimes. But when an HMO kills a patient because they won't approve the appropriate test—and I have seen it time and time again in my State, where tests for cancer were denied because they were expensive diagnostic tests, and HMOs wind up essentially killing a patient because they got treatment too late—they let them off the hook: We don't want the right to sue. Let these people just walk away with maybe a slap on their wrists.

Where is the outrage? Where is the outrage when people die because of medical malpractice or an HMO not willing to invest in our people?

Take the issue of minimum wage, where people are actually living in poverty. For goodness' sake, some in our military are on food stamps. Yet our friends on the other side will vote for luxury jets to ferry around the generals. I don't know where the shame is. I don't know where the outrage is. I can only say that this is where it is

today. It is reflected in the Presidential race, and it is reflected in the Senate races and in the congressional races.

I only ask the American people to wake up, regardless of what party they are in, because that doesn't matter to me. These are not partisan issues. These are issues of right and wrong. These are issues of fairness.

I really think my friend has connected the dots on several of these issues—the gun issue, the Patients' Bill of Rights, prescription drugs, minimum wage. What do these have in common? They are all issues that matter to America's families, the way we live, and the kind of life we have. They are crucial issues. No matter what happens in the Senate when the majority leader brings legislation forward—or doesn't—whether we do nothing or we do something, we are going to come home with these issues and talk about them, and we are going to organize around these issues. Otherwise, I don't think we deserve to be here if we are silent in the face of inaction.

I thank my friend again for taking this time and for engaging in this colloquy.

(Mr. ENZI assumed the chair.)

Mr. DURBIN. We have not only addressed the major legislative issues bottled up and stalled in this Republican Congress—gun safety legislation, Patients' Bill of Rights, prescription drug benefits, increasing the minimum wage. We should listen as well to the rhetoric coming from the Republican candidate for President, George W. Bush, who is suggesting a massive tax cut of over \$2 trillion over 9 years. He is also now suggesting a change in Social Security that will cost over \$800 billion over 9 years—\$2.8 trillion that he has suggested we spend over the next 9 years, when we are told by experts in Washington that the surplus we have to deal with is about \$800 billion. What the Presidential candidate on the Republican side is suggesting is that he wants to return to the era of deficit spending, where we will, over 9 years, go \$2 trillion more in debt.

We can all recall that when President Reagan was elected in 1980, we started on this course of action which led to increasing our national debt to over \$6 trillion. We had more debt accumulated during the Reagan-George Herbert Walker Bush years than we had in the entire previous history of the United States. Now to carry on this fine tradition, Gov. George W. Bush is suggesting we go back to deficit spending, \$2 trillion more in debt, to give tax breaks to wealthy people, to change Social Security in a risky way.

I think that is another fundamental issue. If we are going to deal with America's economy to keep it moving forward, if we are going to bring about the changes we need to make America a better place to live, we certainly don't need to return to deficit spending. I think that is a critical issue that affects everything we do on Capitol Hill.

Mrs. BOXER. Again, my friend raises a very crucial issue. I have the paperwork here, and my friend is right on target. George W. Bush's tax cut proposal is \$1.7 trillion from 2002 to 2010, and going to his privatized plan for Social Security will cost \$1 trillion. My friend said \$800 billion; it is \$1 trillion. The projected on-budget surplus, if the economy continues to do well—and you never can count on that, but we certainly hope so—is \$877 billion, which leaves a \$2.7 trillion deficit. We are going to go back into the bad days.

So not only are George W. Bush and the Republican Party not wanting to act and make life better by moving forward on the issues about which we talked—the gun issue, prescription drugs, the Patients' Bill of Rights, and the minimum wage. So not only won't they change for the good, they want to go back, and we are going to be facing these horrific deficits, a national debt that will start to soar again, the markets will react with high interest rates, and we will be back into the deepest trouble. We will be bailing ourselves out.

I have to say again that by looking at this entire choice we have in this election, it is very interesting. As I listen to my friend, I realize what we face. We face a situation where either we are going to go forward on certain issues but keep fiscal responsibility, or not move on crucial issues that are really life-and-death issues and go back to the days of horrible economic times.

We all remember when President Bush went to Japan and threw up his hands and said: What are we going to do? We are in deep trouble. Help us.

That was not a high point in American life. Now, with the Clinton-Gore team, we are leading the world, but we will only continue if we don't go back to those bad old days of deficits.

I thank my friend.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired. The next hour is under the control of the Senator from Wyoming.

The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

THE SENATE'S AGENDA

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, we will go to the Senator from Minnesota shortly and then the Senator from Texas and then the Senator from Idaho. In the meantime, while they are coming, let me say I have briefly listened to my friends on the other side of the aisle, interestingly enough, complaining about not getting anywhere. Let me talk a little bit about that.

We have been here on the floor now for some time talking about the kinds of things people want to do in this country; for instance, education—elementary and secondary education. We had to pull that after a whole week of discussion and debate because our friends on the other side of the aisle didn't want to move forward. They wanted to bring up the same things

they have brought up every time we have come into this Chamber, and they have done it over and over and over again.

If you want to talk about getting something done, we ought to talk a little bit about education, a little bit about Social Security, a little bit about the military and doing some things for security that we ought to do for this country. Frankly, I think some of us get weary of the same litany every day and going back and forth on the same thing. We have already talked about gun control; we have gun control pending. We have talked about Patients' Bill of Rights; it is pending. It is out there in conference committee. What we need to do is address ourselves to some of the issues that are here.

You can see that I get just a little bit excited about this. But we have an opportunity to do some things. We have to do some things on this floor, and we need to move forward and stop this business of holding up everything so we can talk about trying to make issues for the election instead of trying to find solutions.

I yield to my friend, the Senator from Minnesota.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. GRAMS. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

I thank my colleague from Wyoming for all his good work in trying to keep us focused on the issues about which we are concerned.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following the official Senate photo, the Senate begin consideration of S. 2549, the Department of Defense authorization bill.

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

Mr. GRAMS. I thank the Chair.

THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I want to take time today to again talk about what I think is one of the most important issues facing Americans this year, and probably in the next few years; that is, what is the future of Social Security? How are we going to make sure we have a safe and sound retirement system not only for those on retirement today and those about to retire, but also for our children and our grandchildren?

I have held around the State of Minnesota more than 50 townhall meetings trying to outline the problems facing Social Security today, and a plan I have introduced called the Personal Security and Wealth in Retirement Act, which would move from a pay-as-you-go system to a fully-funded, market-based personal retirement accounts.

When you look back at the last 65 years of Social Security, it has basi-

cally done the job we have asked it to do; that is, to provide retirement benefits for millions of Americans. But if you look ahead to the next 30 years, the system has problems. It is facing some real problems. It is being strained to the limit. In fact, there will not be enough dollars collected in the system to pay the benefits the Government has promised. If the Congress does nothing, Social Security benefits will have to be reduced as much as one-third or more over the next 25 years.

The biggest risk to Social Security is to do nothing. And there are those who are willing to stick their heads in the sand maybe to get by another election and to ignore the problems facing Social Security.

Let me go through some of these things very quickly.

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt introduced Social Security in 1935, he had concerns that it would only be run by the Government. He wanted part of it to be private accounts. In fact, there was many Americans who were allowed to stay outside of Social Security. In fact, there have been a number of state and local governments over the years—as late as 1981—that saw this loophole, opted out of Social Security, and created their own personal retirement accounts. None of them, by the way, has failed; all have been successful. By that I mean they are paying better benefits to their retirees than Social Security is paying to our retirees today.

President Roosevelt also said that there should be a three-legged stool for Americans' retirement: personal savings, pension, and Social Security. Social Security is just one of the legs. It was never meant to be the sole source of retirement benefits. But for millions of Americans today—when they are paying an average tax bill of nearly 40 percent of their wages in taxes, then they try to raise their family; buy food, clothing, shelter; put a little money away for vacations, and for education for their kids, et cetera—they do not have money left to save for their retirement. If you work for an employer that doesn't have a pension or 401(k), your only source of retirement is Social Security. Clearly, Social Security has stretched to its limit.

Right now, 78 million baby boomers are ready to hit the system by the year 2008. The majority of Americans—nearly 90 percent—retire at the age of 62, not at 65. We are going to see baby boomers bumping into the system beginning as early as 2008. Social Security spending will exceed tax revenues by 2015.

We hear about all of these surpluses in Social Security and the trust fund.

But the truth is there is nothing in the trust fund but IOUs. Senator FRITZ HOLLINGS of South Carolina says there is no trust, and there are no funds in the Social Security trust funds. He is right.

By 2015 there will be no more surpluses. In other words, if we are collecting \$100 today and only spending

\$90, the other \$10 is put into this trust fund. Of course, the Government borrows the surplus and spends it. By the year 2015, we will be bringing in \$90 and paying out \$100 or more. Where do we get the extra money? We are going to have to get it from the taxpayers. By 2015, taxes are going to have to be raised to cash in these IOUs in order to pay the benefits at that time.

You hear a lot of Senators and others saying the system is solvent until 2037. That is only if we can raise taxes on workers to pay those benefits. That is the only way it can remain solvent. Congress is going to have to take action. The Social Security trust fund is going to be broke in 2037 unless we have the dollars to cash in those IOUs. The reason is our pay-as-you-go retirement system cannot meet the challenge of the demographic change.

In 1940, there were about 100 working for every retiree. Today, there are a little over 2.5. By the year 2025, there will be fewer than 2. In 1940, with 100 people working, you only had to pay \$10 a month to pay for a \$1,000 benefit. Today, it is over \$400. And we are going to ask our grandchildren to pay \$500 or more in order to meet this obligation of retirement benefits.

If you look over the next 75 years, it is going down like a rock. There is \$21.6 trillion in unfunded liabilities. In other words, the benefits the Government has promised to pay—\$21.6 trillion—are short of revenues we need to pay those benefits.

How are we going to make them up? There are a couple of choices. We can raise taxes and tinker a little bit with the system. But you cannot tinker with \$21.6 trillion deficit. They can cut benefits by a third of what retirees can expect to get. Or they can raise the retirement age. But that will not be enough to make up the \$21.6 trillion in deficits over the next 75 years if we don't do make hard choice to save the system.

My plan, the Personal Security and Wealth in Retirement Act, has a transitional cost as well. But it is the cost we have to pay anyway. It would cost about \$13 trillion for us to make the transition to go from the Social Security system we know today to total personal retirement accounts. In other words, we are moving to a system where you have control over your retirement—not Washington—you decide when to retire, how much you want save and where you want to invest and how you want to control over your account.

In reality, we have signed our name to a long-term contract that says we are going to guarantee retirement benefits for Americans forever. There is a cost because we have dug ourselves into a hole. Somehow we have to dig ourselves out. There is no free lunch. People around here can ignore it, but there is no free lunch. We are going to have to find a way to finance ourselves to reach our goals to have a safe, solid, and solvent Social Security system.