

and meet with the military leadership in Taiwan, a democratic entity.

It is only a matter of common sense that in the event of a crisis—a crisis now more likely—we should be able to communicate with the Taiwanese military—the people we may be called to defend.

Opponents of this bill claim that ambiguity is good. But there is nothing ambiguous about the Chinese position. The Chinese White Paper even specifically opposed the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act.

I suggest we should not be ambiguous about our support for democracy in Asia, nor should we apologize to China for helping Taiwan to defend itself.

I believe China has made itself clear on the Taiwan issue. So should we.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Illinois.

TRIBUTE TO JEANNE SIMON

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today on the floor of the Senate to pay tribute to a great friend who passed away on Sunday. Her name was Jeanne Simon, the wife of my friend and former colleague in the House, my predecessor in the Senate, Senator Paul Simon of Illinois. Jeanne Simon passed away in the early morning hours on Sunday in her home in Makanda, IL, in the southern part of our State.

She had been suffering for several months from a brain tumor, and the end was obvious when I last saw her a few weeks ago. As Paul Simon told me when I called and asked if we could get together: Her spirits are good. He was certainly right. We laughed over dinner and reminisced over old political experiences and had a great time, as we did for over 30 years in similar meetings and dinners.

Jeanne Simon was an extraordinary person. She was one of the first women to serve in the Illinois House of Representatives. She was a graduate of Northwestern Law School and served as an assistant State's attorney when very few women were involved in the profession, let alone as prosecutors.

She met another young legislator when she served in Springfield, IL, a State representative named Paul Simon. The two hit it off and decided to get married in 1960. Jeanne Simon put her legislative and professional career aside to become a wife and a mother and to become a help mate, not just at home but in the political career of her husband, Paul Simon.

President Clinton was wont to say when he was elected: America got two—buy one, get one free—in terms of the First Lady and her contribution to the Nation. We felt the same in the State of Illinois. Whenever we looked at the Simon package, it was Paul and Jeanne Simon and the kids wrapped up in a very attractive package with a

polka dot bow tie. Time after time, election after election, the people in Illinois turned to Paul Simon as Congressman, as Lieutenant Governor, and finally as Senator and bought the package.

Politics is a game of individual statistics. We talk about who won, who lost. In sports we talk about team statistics, but when it came to the Simons, we were dealing with a team statistic. We knew that whenever Paul Simon was there fighting for Illinois and the causes in which he believed, Jeanne Simon was right at his side.

She had special passions and commitments to literacy and to education. She served as chair of the National Commission on Libraries, and one of the last things I ever heard from her was a call late in the session last year: Check on that appropriation for libraries. She was committed to it.

Jeanne Simon was the kind of person, too, whom I trusted in terms of her judgment. She was honest and forthright and you knew when she stood up for a cause it was because she really believed in it.

How many people, men and women, in Illinois political life were inspired and encouraged by Jeanne Simon over the years. She has left a great legacy. I consider myself to be one of the beneficiaries of that legacy. Now that she has passed away, we can reflect on the fact that even as a wife and mother of a great politician like Paul Simon, she left an enduring contribution to the State of Illinois and to the Nation.

Jeanne Simon will be missed, and many in this Chamber who knew her and worked with her on so many important issues will appreciate, as I have, what a great and enduring legacy she left with her life.

I yield the floor.

Several Senators addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Ohio.

BIENNIAL BUDGETING

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, 2 weeks ago, the administration released its budget for fiscal year 2001—its last and its biggest, totaling \$1.8 trillion and proposing a whole host of new programs.

So begins our annual budget process.

From now until September 30, Congress will conduct dozens of hearings and hold countless meetings, while members of both Houses deliver innumerable speeches and spend long hours of debate over every subtle nuance of the Federal budget process.

Over the next 8 months, Congress will consider a budget resolution, a budget reconciliation package and as many as 13 separate appropriations bills—the latter only if we do not combine those appropriations bills into one massive spending bill, as has been the practice in recent years.

By the time Congress adjourns—currently scheduled for October 6—a ma-

majority of votes taken in the Senate will relate to the budget process.

Indeed, as my colleague, the distinguished chairman of the Budget Committee, Senator DOMENICI, has pointed out, 73% of the Senate's votes in 1996 were budget-related, 65% in 1997, and 51% in 1998. It is no wonder—each year, it is quite common for the same subject to be voted upon 3 or 4 times during the course of the entire budget process.

Despite the inordinate amount of time and effort that Congress will put into fashioning a budget that will meet our Nation's spending needs in a fiscally responsible way, a veto threat still looms on each of the appropriations bills if spending does not approach what the President wants.

At that point, high-stakes negotiations between the Congress and the President will ensue. In an effort to avoid a Government shutdown—and the blame that goes with it—these negotiations inevitably yield a spending compromise that neither Congress nor the President particularly likes, but both agree is necessary.

It is a heck of a way to run a railroad, but what is really unbelievable is this whole process is repeated each year.

I say enough is enough. It's time to bring rationality to our nation's budget process.

It's a fact that Congress spends too large a portion of its time debating and voting on items related to the Federal budget. Meanwhile, most other Congressional functions are not given proper attention.

We need to reestablish our priorities so we may effectively do the work of the people, make sure that the Federal Government is running at peak efficiency and deliver value, which is quality service for the least amount of money.

I believe we have an excellent opportunity to do that this year.

One of the first bills I cosponsored when I became a Senator was a measure introduced by Senator PETE DOMENICI that would establish a 2-year budget—just like we have in about 20 States including the State of Ohio. I believe enactment of this bill, S. 92, will provide an important tool in the efficient use of Federal funds while strengthening Congress' proper oversight role.

Because Congress produces annual budgets, Congress does not spend nearly as much time as it should on oversight of the various Federal Departments and agencies due to the time and energy consumed by the budget resolution, budget reconciliation, and appropriations process.

Not only is this a problem for Congress, but each executive branch agency and department must spend a significant amount of its time on each annual budget cycle.

Again, as my colleague, Senator DOMENICI, pointed out in his statement on S. 92, the executive branch spends 1

year putting together a Federal budget, 1 year explaining that Federal budget before Congress, and 1 year implementing the budget eventually passed by Congress.

Even the most diligent Cabinet Secretary cannot keep track of all the oversight he or she is supposed to accomplish if they are trapped in this endless budget cycle.

A biennial budget will help Congress and the executive branch avoid this lengthy process. Since each particular Congress lasts only 2 years, a biennial budget would allow us to consider a 2-year funding proposal during 1 year, while reserving the second year for the Government oversight portion of our job.

As chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management and Restructuring in the Governmental Affairs Committee, I have noted that even though the General Accounting Office conducts numerous reports documenting Government inefficiencies that need to be corrected, most GAO reports sit on the shelf because there is no time to conduct detailed hearings.

When oversight hearings are held, nearly everyone in the executive branch knows—from career bureaucrats to Cabinet Secretaries—that they need only weather the immediate storm when they are asked to come to the Hill to testify.

That is because once they answer the criticisms that have been leveled in these GAO reports, and explain how they are going to improve the situation, it is over; the worst has passed. Rarely do they have to worry about followup hearings to make sure they have implemented the proper remedies because they know Congress just will not have the time to conduct future hearings.

Unfortunately, that reality can lead to problems later on that impact public safety or national security.

Last year, the Governmental Affairs Committee held hearings regarding Dr. Wen Ho Lee and the security situation at the Los Alamos National Lab. I was shocked to learn that for 20 years we have had a problem with security at the Department of Energy, and no one did anything about it. But GAO knew: they had released 31 major reports on nuclear-security problems at the Department since 1980.

Congress needs the time to conduct proper oversight—including followup investigations—in order to make sure that situations like this do not repeat. Without having to devote the majority of its time and energy to annual budget bills, Congress will be able to make sure that the Federal Government operates harder and smarter and does more with less. I am confident that the Senate will pass S. 92—biennial budget legislation—during this session of Congress.

Regardless of the Senate's actions on passing this bill, I believe the House of Representatives needs to be more en-

gaged in this process. Unfortunately, the news reports that I have seen indicate that there is not much support at the leadership level in the House for such a bill.

I urge my colleagues in the House to reconsider their views on biennial budget legislation, or in the alternative, pass a better legislative proposal. Congress should not continue to come up with reasons why budget reform can't pass, but find ways to make sure that it can.

It should be plainly obvious to my colleagues in both Houses—including those on the Appropriations Committees—that the annual appropriations process is not working. As I stated earlier, each year Congress ends up negotiating a spending deal that is higher than Congress wants in order to avoid the Presidential veto pen. If we are ever going to get a handle on our debt, we have to end this bad public policy. It would definitely be in the best interest of our Nation.

I believe this biennial budget legislation, S. 92, is one of the most important pieces of legislation we could consider this year. I will continue to press for its passage.

For my colleagues who are tired of the seemingly endless budget and appropriations cycles and are frustrated at the inability to devote enough time to the oversight duties of their committees, I urge them to join in cosponsoring this legislation. I also urge my House colleagues to review the merits of the biennial budget process and act upon legislation as expeditiously as possible for the good of America.

The point I am making is this. It is time for this Congress to adopt a 2-year budget cycle instead of the one we have had for too many years. It will help us do a better job in terms of budgeting and certainly get us to do the oversight that is so badly needed by this Congress.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. WYDEN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Oregon.

PREScription DRUG AFFORDABILITY

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, similar to many of our colleagues, I have been back home in my State at townhall meetings. One of the very consistent themes I heard is that folks want to see us address some of the key issues of our time, particularly the economic issues.

I have heard again and again—and it is clear—that millions of senior citizens cannot afford their prescription medicine. I heard again and again that millions of married couples are being shackled by this marriage tax penalty. It seems to me Congress can fashion a prudent, well-crafted bill that addresses this marriage tax penalty and also responds to the concerns of seniors—

without blowing up the budget, without violating the principles of fiscal responsibility, and by prudent use of the surplus.

Democrats want to see—and Democrats are anxious to work with Republicans on this—an effort to help the many seniors and families who are walking on an economic tightrope trying to afford their prescription drug bills. We want to see meaningful tax relief for married couples. What we have to do is work together, in a bipartisan way, to fashion that.

I will spend just a minute talking about how serious this prescription drug problem is for the Nation's older people.

When I was home recently, I heard from an elderly woman in Yoncalla, OR. She lives by herself. She lives in southern Oregon. She has an income of about \$500 a month. When she is done paying her prescription drug bill, she has just a little bit over \$200 to live on for the rest of the month. She lives a long way from pharmacies, so she cannot very well comparison shop.

She wants to know, why isn't it possible for this Congress to enact a prescription drug benefit for her and for others similarly situated? My view is, if we do not enact a prescription drug benefit for this person, she is going to end up a lot sicker and with a lot more health problems than she has today. That will be much more expensive to the taxpayers.

In addition, I recently heard from an elderly couple from Baker, OR, who have to take a great many prescription drugs. After their monthly medication, together they have less than \$200 on which to get by. They said in their letter: "That is not living. That is existing."

Colleagues, it is very clear that in a country as rich and as strong as ours, we clearly are capable of doing justice to the vulnerable older people, such as the elderly folks I described from rural Oregon who are struggling to make ends meet and cannot afford their prescription drugs.

People ask us all the time: Can we afford prescription drug coverage? My message is: We cannot afford not to cover prescription drugs.

One of these anticoagulant medicines that helps prevent strokes in older people might cost \$1,000 or \$1,500 a year—certainly pricey—but you prevent that stroke with the medication and you save upwards of \$100,000 that an older person might incur in expenses for problems associated with the stroke.

What we need to do—and the President has one approach; Senator KENNEDY has another approach; Senator SNOWE and I have worked together on a bipartisan basis—is bring these bills together and make sure we use marketplace forces to hold down the costs of prescription drugs for older people. Each one of these bills—the kind of approach the President is talking about, as well as the approaches Senator KENNEDY and Senator SNOWE and I are