

addition to her ministry, she has served as a member of my Senate staff on the Judiciary Committee.

All of us on both sides of the aisle and with the Clinton administration who have worked with Angela have great respect for her ability and dedication. Her principal responsibilities have been in the area of law enforcement issues, especially hate crimes, and she deserves great credit for her leadership on this important issue in our country today.

Angela will be leaving my staff at the end of this week. All of us who know Angela wish her well. We have been very impressed with her calling to the ministry and her dedication to it. It has been a privilege to work with her as a member of our Senate family, and we are grateful for her inspiring prayer as guest Chaplain today.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VOINOVICH). The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I yield to the Senator from South Carolina.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. THURMOND. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. THURMOND pertaining to the submission of S. Res. 342 are located in today's RECORD under "Submissions of Concurrent and Senate Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

#### REPUBLICAN AGENDA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this week will be the last week before we break for the party conventions—the Republicans in Philadelphia; the Democrats in Los Angeles. We have a full array of legislation that could be considered this week. I am not sure, being a member of the lowly minority, as to what issues we will actually address, but the American people should pay close attention to what has occurred in this Chamber in the last 2 weeks.

A little bit of history puts it in perspective. Not that many years ago, we were struggling with annual deficits. It was crippling the economy of the United States and certainly causing a shockwave across America as families had to step back and consider the impact of a huge national debt that we passed on to future generations. In fact, our national debt now is approaching \$6 trillion, and we collect \$1 billion in taxes every single day in America to pay interest on our old debt.

That \$1 billion in taxes does not educate a child; it does not buy a tank or a gun; it does not provide health insurance for anyone; it does not improve Social Security or Medicare. It pays interest on old debt.

It is debt that was accumulated primarily during the period when Presidents Reagan and Bush were in office and some partially during the period when President Clinton first began, but

we have turned the corner. People have come to understand a dramatic thing has occurred. We are now reaching a point where we are not talking about deficits and debt but about the possibility, the opportunity of a surplus. This is something which America's families and businesses have worked hard to earn: a surplus that reflects a strong economy with more and more people working, which reflects the fact we have had the greatest period of economic expansion in the history of the United States. In fact, I hope we do not become blasé about this. This is something that was hard to achieve and American families and businesses working with our Government leaders reached this new point.

Having reached the point where we can look ahead and say we have a strong economy and a surplus coming, it is now up to the Congress to decide what to do with that surplus. There are two very different approaches as to what to do with the surplus.

During the last 2 weeks, the Republican Party has come to the floor of the Senate and suggested they know what to do with this surplus. They have suggested we take \$1 trillion, approximately half of the projected surplus over the next 10 years or so, and dedicate it to tax cuts. Tax cuts are a popular proposal for politicians. Any of us would like to stand before a crowd in our States or hometowns and talk about cutting their taxes. But the honest question is, Is that the best thing for us to do at this moment in time?

On the Democratic side, we believe that there is a better approach. We believe our first obligation is to pay down the national debt, strengthening Social Security and Medicare and making certain that our children carry less of a burden in the future. The Republicans say give tax cuts, primarily to wealthy people, over \$1 trillion worth. We say take that money and pay down the debt. We are not sure if that surplus is actually going to be there 2 years, 4 years, 6 years from now. Wouldn't every family and business in America agree it is more sensible to first retire this huge debt that looms over America and its future? That is the Democratic position.

Most people believe we should deal with the national debt. The Republican position, with notable exceptions, including the Presiding Officer, who has taken a more conservative approach when it comes to dealing with the surplus—is, no, we should cut taxes on a permanent basis and hope for the best. The tough part of it, too, is that this cutting of taxes is primarily going to those at the highest income levels.

I had a chart last week which showed that 43 percent of the estate tax cut proposed by the Republicans went to people making over \$300,000 a year. For people with an average income of \$900,000 a year—a show of hands is not necessary—the Republicans proposed a \$23,000-a-year tax break. If one is making somewhere in the neighborhood of

\$75,000 a month, will another \$2,000 a month really make a difference in their life? I find that hard to imagine. Yet when it comes right down to it, that is what we hear from the Republican side: Give the tax breaks to the wealthiest people in America.

On our side, we believe this surplus should be used to pay down the debt, strengthen Social Security and Medicare, and then find those targeted tax cuts that can make a real difference in a person's life.

Let me give a few examples of targeted tax cuts that cost far less than what the Republicans have suggested but would mean dramatic tax relief to working families. I start with middle-income families worried about paying for college education expenses, as well they should be. Between 1990 and 1998, average tuition and fees increased 79 percent at public universities, 56 percent at private 4-year institutions, compared to a 23-percent increase in the Consumer Price Index and a 41-percent increase in per capita disposable income. Families know this. When children are born, they think ahead: How are we going to pay for this kid's college education?

On the Democratic side, we believe if we are talking about changing tax policy, let us give to middle-income families the deduction of college education expenses, a helping hand so that if a son or daughter is accepted at a good university, they don't have to make the decision that they can't go because of money. That is our idea. We would have deduction for college education expenses.

The Republican idea is an estate tax cut that would give an average \$23,000-a-year tax break to people making \$900,000 a year. What is of more value to the future of America: Someone who gets \$2,000 a month to put it in an investment or another vacation home or a family who takes a tax break offered on the Democratic side and helps their son or daughter go to the very best college or university into which they can be accepted?

Secondly, working families I know are struggling with the concept of day care, what to do with the children during the day so they have peace of mind in that the children are safe in a quality environment. Some working people choose day-care centers in their hometowns. They can be very expensive. I know my grandson is in day care, a very good one. I am happy he is there. Many families don't have that luxury. They can't turn to good day care because they can't afford it. What about the family who decides that instead of both parents working, one will stay home to care for the child? That is a good decision to make, if one can afford to make it.

On the Democratic side—this is another change in tax policy that is far better for America than to give tax breaks to wealthy people—Senator DODD of Connecticut came to the floor and said: Let's help families pay for

day-care center expenses with a tax credit or offer a tax credit to mothers who will stay at home with children so they will get a helping hand, too. I think that is eminently sensible.

We know that children in the early stages of their life really are forming their minds and their values, and we want them to be in the very best environment. If they get off to a good start, many kids will do well in school and have a great future ahead of them. But on the other side of the coin, if children are being pushed and shoved from one incompetent and dangerous babysitter to the next, it is risky. It is something no family would want to face. On the Democratic side, instead of tax breaks for the wealthy, we want to target tax breaks for those who are struggling to find a way to keep a parent at home to watch a child or to pay for day care.

A third area we have worked on is the whole question of long-term care. Baby boomers understand this. Their parents and their grandparents are reaching an age where they need special attention, special help, special care. Much of it is expensive. Families are making sacrifices for their parents, the elderly, and their families. We think they deserve a helping hand. We understand people are living longer and have special needs. We have proposed a tax break that will help families who are concerned about long-term care and caring for their parents and elderly people.

These are the types of targeted tax breaks which the Democrats support: Deduction of college education expenses; help for day care, to keep parents at home so they can watch their children; help for long-term care, to take care of our aging parents. This is our concept of targeted tax relief. The Republican concept of tax relief is a \$23,000 annual tax break for people making over \$300,000 a year.

Frankly, I will take this issue anywhere in my home State of Illinois. I would like to argue this point as to whether we take a handful of people and give them the most exceedingly generous tax breaks or look at 98 percent of America's families who are struggling with the realities of life.

I am glad my colleague from Massachusetts is here. I will be happy to yield to him at any point. I want to make one point before I do.

There are many other issues which are languishing in this Congress which need to be addressed, issues to which the American people look to us for leadership. I will cite a few so one can understand the frustration, many times, of dealing with real-life problems at home and this Disneyland situation on Capitol Hill. The people need to be represented in this Chamber, not the powerful. The powerful have their lobbyists. The special interests have their political action committees. They have shown extraordinary strength when it comes to stopping issues about which people really care. Allow me to address a few.

A prescription drug benefit under Medicare: Is there another action we can take in America that is fairer or better for our seniors and disabled than to give them the opportunity to afford prescription drugs?

Is it not scandalous that senior citizens in many States get in buses and take 100-mile trips over the border to Canada to buy their prescription drugs? The same drugs manufactured in the United States, approved for sale in the United States, can be purchased in Canada for a fraction of the cost.

Is it not scandalous and disgraceful that senior citizens across America, when they receive the prescriptions from their doctor and are told, take this medicine; you will be strong and healthy and independent if you do, can't afford to fill the prescription, go to the store and find they have to choose between food and medicine, fill the prescription and take half of what they are supposed to because they can't afford it? That is a reality of life. It is something we should address.

The simple fact is, this Congress has failed to come up with a prescription drug benefit under Medicare. We have talked about it for a year and a half or longer. The President has called for it for years. The Republican Congress says no because the pharmaceutical companies, which are enjoying some of the greatest profits in their history, don't want to see this prescription drug benefit. They know that if we have the bargaining power under Medicare to keep prices under control, their profit margins might slip.

So, once again, the powerful and special interest groups are the ones that are prevailing. The Republican answer to this is, well, why don't we turn to the same insurance companies that offer HMOs and managed care and ask them if they would offer a prescription drug benefit. Excuse me if I am skeptical, but we know what these companies have done when it comes to life-and-death decisions on medical care. Too many times they say no when they should say yes. People are forced into court before judges to plead and beg and do their very best to get the basic care they need to survive.

Is that what we want to see when it comes to life-saving prescription drugs, another battle between America's families and these insurance companies?

We received a report recently about over a million people who have lost their HMO Medicare policies—cancelled—because the companies didn't think they were making enough money. The Republicans say that is the answer. We don't think so. It should be a universal, guaranteed program under Medicare, one that you are confident will allow your doctor to give you a prescription that you can fill and will allow you to be able to afford to fill it. That is another issue stopped in this Congress by the special interest groups.

The Patients' Bill of Rights would let the doctors make the decisions, not the

insurance companies. We have lost that issue on the floor of the Senate. We raised that issue and the insurance companies prevailed. They would not let Senator KENNEDY's bill come forward to give people the peace of mind that they were getting the best medical care and that they would not have to fight with a clerk from an insurance company when it came to what they and the people they love might need.

As at Columbine High School, all of the press reports about shootings in schools and in other places shock America from one coast to the other. Can this Congress pass commonsense legislation for gun safety for a background check at gun shows, to make sure criminals and children don't get their hands on guns? Can we pass legislation to require a child safety device on every handgun so that kids don't rummage through the closet, find a handgun, and shoot themselves or a playmate? No. The answer is we can't because the powerful gun lobby stopped that legislation from being passed as well.

Prescription drug benefits, Patients' Bill of Rights, commonsense gun safety legislation, and an increase in the minimum wage—Senator KENNEDY has fought for that for years. The minimum wage is \$5.15 an hour in this country. Imagine trying to live on that, on the \$10,000 or \$12,000 a year in income that it generates. That is next to impossible. We have tried to raise the minimum wage because we believe it is not only fair but it gives people who go to work every day a chance for a livable wage. The Republicans say, no, we can't afford a livable wage; we can't afford to increase the minimum wage, but we can afford to give a trillion dollar tax break to the wealthiest people in this country.

Does that make sense? Is it fair or just? I don't think so.

The issues of education and health care, compensation for working people, a Patients' Bill of Rights, prescription drug benefits, none of these have been addressed. The Republicans will be off to their convention in Philadelphia in a few days. They will take great pride in talking about what they have achieved in Washington. I hope the American people will take a look at the list of issues I have referred to and ask themselves how many of those issues are important to their families. I think many of them are. All of them are stalled because the people don't rule in this Chamber, the powerful do. Those powerful special interests have stopped our attempts to try to make sure we have sensible fiscal policy to keep this economy moving forward, to pay down our debt, strengthen Social Security and Medicare, and to make sure that tax cuts help the people who deserve them.

We have a big agenda in this town and very little of it has been addressed. I think it is a commentary on this Congress and its leadership that we have failed to respond to the issues that families in America care about.

Before yielding the floor to the Senator from Massachusetts, I ask unanimous consent that this editorial from the Chicago Tribune of Sunday, July 23, 2000, entitled "Budget Surplus Induces Frenzy," be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

#### BUDGET SURPLUS INDUCES FRENZY

Congressional Democrats have likened the Republicans' tax-cutting frenzy to a "legislative Wild West." But a growing number of Democrats, too, are hitching up their britches and joining the roundup, crossing the aisle to vote for tax cuts as well as their own spending increases. What is prompting all this activity is a federal budget surplus that seems to have taken on a magical life of its own.

Capitol Hill is awash in money. Why make hard choices when you can have it all? Blink and you just may have missed the latest incredibly rosy forecast of that gargantuan budget surplus. The economy is now approaching \$10 trillion in size and more Americans are working than ever. That means federal tax receipts are soaring—the prime reason that the budget surplus keeps growing.

The latest revision by the Congressional Budget Office estimates the surplus at \$232 billion for the fiscal year ending Sept. 30—\$53 billion higher than the April estimate. Through 2010, the surplus is forecast to be \$2.2 trillion. Include Social Security surpluses and it grows to \$4.5 trillion. If your mind isn't boggled by these sums, you just aren't paying attention.

But before Congress proceeds to spend every last red cent of this money, here are a few cautionary red flags.

#### PAY DOWN THE DEBT

The national debt totals \$5.6 billion. Reducing the publicly held portion of it—about \$3.6 trillion—is akin to giving the whole nation a tax cut because it reduces future debt service. This must be the No. 1 priority.

#### GET REAL WITH SPENDING CAPS

They were imposed in 1997 when it looked like the only way for America to dig itself out of a swamp of red ink was to strictly limit discretionary spending. That's what gets spent on everything else after defense, debt service and entitlement programs like Social Security and Medicare are paid for. Well, the deficit swamp has been drained. The caps remain, but that doesn't mean Congress complies with them. The Republicans have been moving spending in or out of the current fiscal year or calling it an "emergency," allowing them to technically meet the caps but still spend lavishly.

This is worse than having no caps at all. It is time to be honest about these spending caps. Establish a new baseline cap; allow for minimal annual increase, then stick to it.

#### REMEMBER PROJECTIONS AREN'T REAL MONEY—YET

That doesn't mean the projected surplus won't become real money. But 10 years is a long time and a lot can change over a decade. If you don't believe that, just remember back to 1990 and the projected deficits that seemed to stretch endlessly into the future.

#### SOCIAL SECURITY AND MEDICARE STILL NEED WORK

Neither presidential candidate has addressed the core demographic problem that looms for these programs: the aging of the giant Baby Boom generation. The Concord Coalition refers to both their Social Security reform plans as "free lunch proposals." There is no free lunch. Expanding tax-free

retirement accounts—as Al Gore proposes—or allowing market investment of some portion of Social Security taxes—as George Bush proposes—won't change the fact that the system will become actuarially unsound unless benefits are cut, taxes raised or the retirement age delayed.

Add to Medicare's shaky fiscal foundation some looming big ticket items—a prescription drug benefit and some provision for long-term care—that will have to be financed if, as seems increasingly likely, the nation decides they are essential to have.

#### LISTEN TO ALAN GREENSPAN

The spending and tax cut "debates" under way now have little to do with the soundness of overall fiscal policy. Is this a good thing to consider? Should we do this? These are not the questions being asked. There is an assumption that the money is there, so why bother with that debate? If they're politically popular—and what's not to like about a tax cut or higher spending—put 'em in the pot. The most recent example of this is the metamorphosis of the GOP drive to end the marriage tax penalty. This has now grown into a generous tax cut for all married people, with a total 10-year price tag of \$292 billion.

No one can guarantee the economy will continue to prosper as robustly as it has. "A number of the potential programs, both expenditures and tax cuts in the pipeline, do give me some concern," said Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan, at his mid-year economic review on Capitol Hill last week. "The growing surplus has kept the expansion stable. Tax cuts or spending increases that significantly slow the rise of surpluses would put the economy at risk."

Listen to the man.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

Mr. KENNEDY. How much time do we have remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SANTORUM). On the Democratic side, the time is until 10 o'clock.

#### THE SENATE'S CALENDAR OF BUSINESS

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I point out to our colleagues and friends the Calendar of Business for the Senate. This is the calendar of the business pending, the unfinished business, and a list of various pieces of legislation reported out of the committees.

The American people probably don't have this at their fingertips, but if you take the time to look at this when you visit the library, or you can write to Members of the Congress, you will find out that in the pending business the first order is a bill to extend programs and activities under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Right next to it, it says May 1, 2000. That means that this has been the underlying and pending piece of legislation. Yet we are denied any opportunity to address what is going to be the Federal participation in working with States and local communities in the areas of education. We didn't address it in the rest of May. We received assurances by the Republican leadership that we were going to come back and address those issues and questions. We didn't do it in June, and we didn't do it in July, although we were told we

would be able to address these issues in evening sessions and have a disposition of that legislation.

In the meantime, what have we done? As my friend from Illinois has pointed out, we have seen a tax cut of over \$1 trillion. We had something else done, too. The House of Representatives have given themselves a pay increase of \$3,800 a year. We didn't see the increase in the minimum wage. They didn't vote for that. In fact, when TOM DELAY was asked about the increase in the minimum wage, he said: That doesn't affect us. What he continued to say is we are not in the business; we are overseers of a \$2 trillion economy. And he was quite dismissive of the problems and challenges that are affecting working families at the lower wrung of the economic ladder.

We have not done the American people's business. We are not addressing the questions of smaller class sizes. We are not addressing the issue of trying to train teachers to be better teachers. We are not addressing the issue of afterschool programs. We are not addressing the efforts to try to deal with the problems of the digital divide. We are not dealing with the greater kinds of accountability of the expenditures of funds in terms of education. That is off the agenda. As has been pointed out many times since the founding of the Republic, debates on the floor of the Senate are about priorities.

The majority leaders have effectively dismissed debate, discussion, and action on education in order to have a trillion dollar tax cut for the wealthiest individuals and a pay increase for themselves. No attention to prescription drugs. Thumbs down on that. Thumbs down on a Patients' Bill of Rights. We haven't got time to debate a Patients' Bill of Rights or a Medicare prescription drug program. We haven't got the time to debate a gun issue to try to make our schools safer. But we have the time to debate a trillion dollar tax cut and a pay increase of \$3,800.

If you take the increase in the minimum wage for 2 years, we are talking about half of what the increase would be for a Member of Congress. We can't even debate it. We can't discuss it. We can't vote on it because that is not part of the agenda of our Republican leadership. That is what this is about. It is about priorities. That is what this election is going to be about, ultimately. No action in terms of the Patients' Bill of Rights, even though we are one vote short of being able to get action, to try to ensure that decisions affecting families are made by doctors and trained medical officials and not accountants for the HMOs. We are not going to have, evidently, action on the gun issues to try to make our schools safer and more secure, to try to limit the availability of guns to children in our society that results in more than 10 children every single day being killed. We are not able to do it. We want to indicate to the majority that we are going to take every step possible to