

It is a tragic thing. We have these trust funds. They talk about Social Security. These are just in trust for Social Security.

In fact, the "other" is on here. The Senator from Alaska is here. He knows good and well that we pay in there under "other" for nuclear storage and the waste storage fund. The private power companies have been paying into that over the years. We have \$19 billion in there. But we can't spend it. We are supposed to spend it in trust only for that. We haven't put it at Yucca Mountain. So we have to hold up. That is part of this \$59 billion "other." We have the Federal Financing Bank held in trust.

When the day of reckoning comes when we can stop increasing the debt—everybody is talking about paying down the debt—if we can just stop increasing it, oh, boy, then we would have set a record in this particular Congress because the debt has been going up, up, and away with the consequent interest costs, which is like taxes. When I pay gasoline taxes, I get a highway. I pay a sales tax, and I can go ahead and get a school, or whatever it is. When I pay interest costs, or interest taxes, I get absolutely nothing. The Government and the economy thereby is in real trouble.

That is the state of the Union.

I thank the distinguished Chair for his indulgence.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROBERTS). The time of the distinguished Senator has expired.

The distinguished Senator from Alaska is recognized.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I listened to my colleague from South Carolina outline the state of the budget. I concur with his pointed criticism of whether or not we have a sound surplus, or whether it is somewhat realistic.

He points out the \$19 billion that has been paid by the ratepayers into the nuclear waste fund, as an example. He and I both know that money has gone into the general fund. It is basically not in escrow. It is not in a reserve account.

When the administration or the Government ever addresses that responsibility, we will have to appropriate that money someplace because it has been spent. As an old banker, I can tell you that interest is like a horse that eats while you sleep. It goes on Saturday night, Sunday morning, and Sunday night. As a consequence, we often find ourselves in the position where the interest exceeds the principal. When that happens, you are broke.

I am certainly sympathetic to the points raised by my colleague.

(The remarks of Mr. MURKOWSKI pertaining to the introduction of S. 2098 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished Senator from Oregon.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS AFFORDABILITY

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, for many months now, I and other Members of this body have been coming to the floor to talk about the need for prescription drug coverage for our older people under Medicare. I have brought to the floor on more than 20 occasions specific cases of older people who, in so many instances, are walking an economic tightrope, trying to balance their food costs against their prescription drug bill, their prescription drug bill against some other necessity. More and more of these older people and their families simply cannot make ends meet.

I wish to address the question of whether this country can afford to cover prescription drugs for older people under Medicare. I submit this Nation cannot afford not to cover these essential health care services.

We talked on the floor about the important drugs such as Lipitor, a cholesterol-lowering drug used by many older people. These drugs are absolutely key to keeping older people well. There is no question that right now if the Government were to pick up the costs of these medicines there would be additional costs, but the savings generated as a result of extending prescription drug coverage to older people, in my view, would be staggering.

I continually cite the exciting contributions made by these new medicines that prevent strokes. They are known as anticoagulant drugs. For an older person, it might cost perhaps \$1,000 a year to pay for the drugs, anticoagulant drugs that prevent these strokes, but if you prevent a stroke you could save upwards of \$100,000 through an investment that is just a small fraction of those costs.

I am very hopeful it will now be possible to reconcile the various bills that cover prescription drugs for older people. Senator DASCHLE has talked to me on a number of occasions, even a few hours ago, indicating he is very interested in seeing the Congress come together on a bipartisan basis and enact this legislation to meet the needs of older people and better utilize the dollars that are available for health care in this country.

The stories we have accumulated from home are tragic. I heard yesterday from an older woman in Tillamook, OR. She recently took another senior, an 80-year-old woman, to the emergency room. This 80-year-old woman said she could not afford the one medication she needed to control her high blood pressure. As a result, she almost died.

From what we are seeing across this country, we either now go forward and make a well-targeted investment to make sure vulnerable seniors get help with prescription drugs or we end up with vastly more people suffering and much increased costs.

I have received scores of letters from across rural Oregon. These are from people who have to drive 40 miles, 50

miles to a pharmacy. They don't have big health plans that negotiate discounts for them.

In Baker City, OR, I have been told by an older couple they are getting by on \$200, the two of them, for their entire month after they are done paying their prescription drug bills. There is not a one of us in the Senate who could live in that kind of arrangement where they essentially had only a couple of hundred dollars a month to pay for their food and shelter and other essentials. A country as good and rich and strong as ours is capable of addressing this need. I think it can be done using an approach that relies on marketplace forces.

I particularly wish to praise my colleague from Maine, Senator SNOWE. I have been able to team up with her on this prescription drug issue for 14 months. When we started in the Budget Committee, I think a lot of folks looked at us and said, Senator SNOWE, Senator WYDEN, they are well meaning but there is no chance this prescription drug issue is going to be addressed.

We have seen over the last few months tremendous progress. There is not a Member of Congress, Democrat or Republican, who goes home and doesn't get asked about this issue. We have a chance to bring the various bills together. Senator DASCHLE wishes to do so, and I know a number of Republicans want to do so as well. Our colleagues in the Senate recognize this ought to be a voluntary program. A lot of lessons have been learned since the catastrophic care issue came before the Congress. This is not going to be a mandatory program. This is not going to be a one-size-fits-all program from Washington. This is going to be based on voluntary choice. We are going to use the dollars that are raised for this program to pick up the prescription drug portion of a senior citizen's private health insurance.

I am not talking about a federalized health care system. We are talking about using private health insurance, making sure older people have a variety of choices and offerings. As a result of those choices and offerings, they can have some big bargaining power.

What happens right now is the health plans, the HMOs, big buyers, go out and negotiate a discount. If you are an older person in rural Nebraska or rural Oregon and you don't have prescription drug coverage, you walk into the Rite Aid or a Fred Meyer or one of your drugstores and you, in effect, have to subsidize the big buyers who are in a position to negotiate discounts. We can use private marketplace forces, the way the Snowe-Wyden legislation does, and the way several of the other bills do, to make sure older people have the kind of bargaining power that makes these prescription drugs more affordable.

I am very pleased that this issue has become a bigger priority in the Congress in the last few weeks. I think now is going to be a test of whether we can,

as Senator DASCHLE and others have suggested, reconcile the various bills that have been introduced on this issue. I do not expect to have the last word on this matter.

Senator SNOWE and I are very proud the financing of our legislation received 54 votes in the Senate when it came up last year. On the Snowe-Wyden amendment, we saw Senator WELLSTONE vote for it, Senator SANTORUM vote for it, Senator KENNEDY vote for it, and Senator ABRAHAM vote for it. That is a pretty good coalition. That is the kind of coalition we can build if we pick up on the counsel of Senator DASCHLE, and I know a number of Republican leaders, to come together and reconcile these various bills.

I intend to keep coming to the floor and reading these cases. Our friend, Senator KERREY, is here. I know he is going to be speaking on an important issue, and I do not want to detain him. I think in this country we are now seeing older people break their pills in half because they cannot afford to pick up the cost of medicine when we have, as we saw in Tillamook, OR, 80-year-old women being taken to emergency rooms and not able to afford their medicine. It is wrong. It is just wrong for this Congress to not address this issue in a bipartisan way this year.

This is not one we ought to put off until after the election and see it used as a political football. It should not be used as fodder for the campaign trail because if it is, too many older people who cannot afford their medicine are going to suffer.

We have a chance to move on a bipartisan basis to reconcile these various bills. I intend to keep coming to the floor of this body again and again to describe these cases, to show how urgent the need is. The President at the State of the Union Address made it clear he was extending the olive branch to both political parties to work with him on this issue. We ought to seize, on a bipartisan basis, the opportunity to use private health insurance, not some federalized Government program, to make sure we meet the needs of older people for prescription medicine.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished Senator from Nebraska is recognized.

CONFRONTING NUCLEAR THREATS

Mr. KERREY. Mr. President, a few weeks ago, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger joined what has become a chorus of distinguished citizens and representatives who are suggesting the decision to deploy the national missile defense system be postponed until after the November 7 Presidential election. Although it may be that a delay is necessitated for other reasons, I hope we do not allow the approach of a Presidential election to prevent us from making important foreign policy decisions.

Not only do I believe this to be a precedent which would hamper future Presidential decisionmaking, but it also ignores the fact that this is a tough decision for any President to make anytime, regardless of the circumstances. It also ignores that it takes time for a new Commander in Chief at the helm of the ship to get his or her foreign policy sea legs. Such a delay could jeopardize our capacity to deploy NMD in a timely fashion.

In his argument, Secretary Kissinger referred to "congressionally imposed deadline." This is a commonly made mistake about what Congress did last year. All we called for was deployment of national missile defense "as soon as it is technologically possible." The administration has said this decision could be made as early as June and has recently indicated this could slip to late summer.

Of the four criteria that will be used by President Clinton to make his decision, the most difficult to quantify is the impact on other arms control agreements. Specifically, the impact most feared is that deployment of this missile defense system would be regarded by the Russians as a violation of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

While I can make a very strong argument that deployment of NMD is permitted under the terms of this treaty, this argument will diminish in importance if the Russian Government abrogates other treaties by modifying their strategic nuclear weapons. This includes the very real and destabilizing prospect of re-MIRVing their missiles or converting single-warhead missiles to multiwarhead missiles. This is why the United States is attempting, and thus far without success, to persuade Russia to allow a modification of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in order to build NMD and avoid potentially serious conflict between the United States and the Russian Government. We have met considerable resistance, not only from the Russians but also from allies who regard our analysis of the ballistic missile threat to be flawed.

To be clear, the new threat is real. We cannot afford to ignore the real threat that an accidental or rogue nation launch of ballistic missiles carrying nuclear weapons poses to the survival of our Nation. The need to build this defensive system, which is still being tested for feasibility and reliability, derives from the national intelligence estimate and an external panel headed by Donald Rumsfeld. Both have concluded that the threat of rogue nation or unauthorized launch of a nuclear, biological, or chemical weapon at the United States of America is real.

As a consequence, we have begun testing a system which would protect Americans against this threat. A test schedule for May will be critically important to demonstrate feasibility and reliability, one of the four Presidential conditions needed for deployment.

Given the risk/reward ratio of defending against nuclear weapons, the current cost estimates over 10 years of an amount that is less than 1 percent of our national defense budget and the unlikely reassessment of this threat, all that would stand in the way of a Presidential decision to deploy would be the potential adverse impact on other agreements.

The President will face this question: Will a decision to deploy NMD result in other nations, especially Russia, reacting in a manner that would produce a net increase in proliferation activity and thus increase the potential for rogue or unauthorized launch of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons?

We are more likely to resolve this potential conflict in a way that increases the safety and security of Americans if President Clinton does not delay the decision until after the November 7 election. This is a decision that should be made on the basis of the current facts and the four criteria for deployment previously outlined by the administration.

To be successful, we should also consider an alternative negotiating strategy that would pose a win-win for both the United States and Russia. It would reduce the threat of weapons of mass destruction. It would improve the relations between the United States and Russia. And it would enable the United States to redirect money from maintaining our current nuclear weapons stockpile to our conventional forces, where a real strain can be seen in recruitment, readiness, and capability.

To spur constructive action, we must force ourselves to remember this grim truth: The only thing capable of killing every man, woman, and child in the United States of America is the Russian nuclear stockpile. We must remember the threat no longer comes from a deliberate attack. Instead, these weapons now present two new and very dangerous threats.

The first is the possibility of an accidental or unauthorized launch of a Russian nuclear weapon. During the cold war, we worried about the military might of the Soviet Union, but today we worry about the military weakness of Russia and her ever-decreasing ability to control the over 6,000 strategic nuclear warheads in her arsenal. There are numerous stories that have emerged out of Russia over the past few years highlighting the vulnerability of these weapons. There are stories of major security breaches at sensitive nuclear facilities. There are stories of unpaid Russian soldiers attempting to sell nuclear-related material in order to feed their families. And there are stories of the continuing decay of the command and control infrastructure needed to maintain the nuclear arsenal of Russia. Each of these demonstrates the vulnerability of the Russian arsenal to an accidental launch based on a technical error or miscalculation or the unauthorized use of a weapon by a rogue group or disgruntled individual.