

AMERICA'S GOAL: DO NOT SPEND THE SURPLUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Madam Speaker, tonight the President of the United States will come before this Chamber in joint session, and I suspect he is going to talk about three areas that should be important to all of us. One is what do we do with taxes and how much should they be lowered, and should we continue a wartime tax rate in this time of peace that is now bringing in an estimated \$5.6 trillion of surpluses over the next 10 years, and probably that is going to be much higher; and, is it reasonable to say that surpluses are really overtaxation.

The next question I think that he will also address is Social Security and the importance of keeping Social Security solvent. If we were to have a perfect world, or, if you will, a perfect Congress, we would probably not have a tax cut and we would start a program keeping Social Security solvent. But the danger in this body and over in the Senate is, if the money is laying there, all this extra surplus money coming in, if it is sort of laying there on the counter, if you will, Congress tends to increase spending.

The President will also talk about the importance of continuing to pay down the debt. And, if you will join me on this chart for just a second for what is the debt of this country, the total public debt as defined in law is made up of three areas where government is borrowing. One is the debt held by the public, the Wall Street debt, the Treasury bills that are issued on a regular basis. That is approximately \$3.4 trillion. On the top we see the pink area, and the pink area is about \$1.1 trillion of money that has been borrowed from extra Social Security taxes coming in, so what government has been doing for the last 40 years is taking this extra surplus from Social Security and spending it on other programs. At least now we have decided to, even though we are not doing anything to fix Social Security and keep it solvent, at least we are not going to spend that money, we have decided. The other area is about \$1.2 trillion that is the other 116 trust funds of Federal Government.

So what we are doing, if we do not fix Social Security and do not use some of that money to invest better than the job we are doing right now with Social Security, we are lending it to the government, government writes an IOU and says, you cannot cash this in, but we will write you an IOU from the money we are borrowing from Social Security, we are taking the actual cash dollars and using it to pay down the debt held by the public. So over time, the debt held by the public will go down, but the amount that we owe the Social Security Trust Fund and the

other trust funds will go up, to keep the total debt of this country about even and not have the total go down.

Madam Speaker, this represents what has happened to the public debt, all three of the previous charts. If my colleagues will join me on this chart, we will see that the public debt of this country has remained relatively low up until the last 20 years, and now it is skyrocketing. What that means to me is that whether it is the debt held by the public or what we owe the Social Security Trust Fund or what we owe the other trust funds, somehow, some place, some time, government is going to have to come up with the money to pay that loan back.

So that is the challenge for us. Where do we come up with that money? How do we come up with that money? If all we do is shuffle boxes around and use the surpluses coming in from Social Security and the other trust funds to pay down the debt held by the public, the debt will go way down low; but when the baby boomers start retiring, then we have to come up with the extra money needed to pay Social Security benefits, and the debt will soar. So again, if we are looking at the previous chart, the debt of this country has been going up tremendously, and now, if we use a little bit of the money of the Social Security surplus to pay down the debt, the debt will actually go down, but then again on the chart we just looked at, we just reviewed, it will again soar.

The challenge before this body is what do we do with the surplus money coming in? Madam Speaker, listen to the increased spending dilemma that has faced this Congress. In 1997, we set budget caps. If we had stuck to those budget caps that we set in 1997, the increased spending over the next 10 years would have been \$1.7 trillion less than it is today. Because of that increased spending, because of the propensity of this Chamber and the Senate and the White House to spend more money, we have increased spending more over the next 10 years because of what we have done in the last 5 than what the President is suggesting as a tax cut. Some of the tax cut will help get some of the money out of town so we will not spend it. That is our goal.

HOUSE MUST ADDRESS ISSUE OF INTENTIONAL DISENFRANCHISEMENT OF MILITARY VOTE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. Goss) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOSS. Madam Speaker, I had the great privilege and honor to travel with colleagues during this past Presidents' break under the leadership of the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER) to visit parliamentarians who deal with NATO concerns. As most Americans know, we have valuable partners overseas providing defense for

peace and well-being all across the Atlantic, including the North American countries and our allies and friends overseas in Europe. We get together a couple of times a year to examine policy and, of course, at this time there is a great deal of interest in the new administration and where it is going. We had useful meetings, timely meetings, and there will be reports coming forth on those in time.

I wanted to speak about an aspect of the trip we took this time that I think is more important, because there is some business for our House. As is customary, we quite often visit our troops when we are out in these areas. We go to remote areas, places like the Sinai on this trip, and dangerous areas, places like the Balkans; and we go to support areas, places like Italy and places where there are active operations in places like Turkey where our troops are flying, our Air Force. We talk to our troops. We get right out there; we do not get just the red carpet treatment talking to the officers. We talk to the men and women in uniform, hearing what their gripes are, their concerns, worries and wants; and we try to get the message back to them to say thanks for what they are doing. We talk to the Army, Marines, Air Force, and Coast Guard when we are in those places.

There was a lot of concern this time in our conversations with the troops; but we did find a common thread on a subject that this House needs to do something about, and that was the fact that their vote was not counted in the last election. There is a concern out there that the extra efforts they took, because it is tough to get their votes cast when they are involved in military duty, because they are doing things in remote parts of the world and it is not like the pleasures that we have and the convenience and the logistics we have, just going and casting our votes on Election Day in this country or even doing an absentee ballot in this country. It is very complicated for them.

So the fact that their vote may have been thrown out is particularly disturbing to them, whether it was because of technical problems like the postmarks on the ballots or the rules for witnesses or whether or not there are time deadlines that could not be managed and so forth because of where they were. These are correctable things, and between the work of the States and the supervisors of elections at the local level and the Federal-level rules, I think we can get this corrected and taken care of.

Madam Speaker, what troubled the troops the most was that there are apparently some people who actively wanted to disenfranchise the military vote because it did not measure up ideologically with the views of their candidate. Unfortunately, as we read in Florida, and I am proud to represent a good part of Florida, southwest Florida, we read public reports in the newspaper that indeed, efforts were under

way to disenfranchise intentionally the military vote because it might turn the election in a different direction. That, of course, is extremely odious.

Madam Speaker, I hope this Congress will take steps to make clear once and for all that the sense of this body and the people who represent the people of the United States of America find this particularly odious, especially when we understand that the risk, the separations, the hardship, the work that our troops are doing around the world, that many of us just take for granted. When you are out there and see it firsthand and talk to these folks, you are proud; and to think that somebody would actively say, we are not sure we want to have their vote counted because it might not help my candidate, is, certainly, misguided.

So we have work to do on this. I urge my colleagues to pay attention to this and support legislation when it comes forward. I am proud of our troops overseas, and I know every single Member of this body is too.

MEMBER REPORT ON U.S. MISSION IN KOSOVO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. SKELTON. Madam Speaker, I have just returned from the Balkans, Bosnia and Kosovo with two other members of the Committee on Armed Services. Due to the ongoing debate in this House and elsewhere regarding the U.S. role, I offer Members a report on my observations.

The situation in Kosovo is, of course, complicated. To be summed up broadly, Serbs inside Kosovo are afraid of the Albanian majority, while those Albanians are afraid of the nation of Serbia next door. These two groups have one thing in common: they are both glad the U.S. and European troops are there to protect them and provide stability.

It is not well known that the U.S. provides a small minority of the force in Kosovo. Visitors who see only Camp Bondsteel and the American sectors can get the impression that the United States stands alone between ancient enemies. That is a skewed view. The fact is that American forces are only 18 percent of the efforts in Kosovo. General Ferrell told me that he intends to reduce the figure by some 15 to 20 percent. In fact, there are more American contractors building roads and schools, cooking meals, providing support for the troops than there are American soldiers.

Let us talk about those soldiers, Madam Speaker. We hear a lot about bringing Americans home and how soldiers do not belong out there, so I asked the soldiers on the line, and they are proud of what they are doing. They told me they are proud to be peace-

makers. They know why they are in Kosovo. In fact, the enlisted soldiers know more about the political situation in the Balkans than a lot of political scientists do here in Washington.

The proof of their pride is that re-enlistment is higher among the units deployed in Kosovo than anywhere else in the Army. The soldiers are working hard and the tempo of operations is high. When our troops believe that they are doing what they came into the Army to do, they will come back, and they are. That is a strong message to all of us and especially to those who think peacekeeping is somehow below the dignity of American soldiers.

Remember, too, that the soldiers on that line today will be the leaders and NCOs of the next conflict, if one comes.

We are also working well with our allies, as well as the Russians. It is a fringe benefit that can pay off for the U.S. in the future. By the way, believe it or not, the Russians send troops to Kosovo as a reward for good service elsewhere. A French general told me that their involvement in Kosovo has been the best thing to happen to recruitment in a long time.

We are making a difference. I asked soldiers of all ranks, What would happen if the U.S. pulled out of the Balkans? One said it best in a simple word: "Boom." Kosovo today is not what it was even 6 months ago. One American sergeant told me that the local population has fought itself out, and that they are glad we are there so that they can stop fighting. But if we leave, the weariness will not prevail.

The peace is clearly tenuous. I visited one village where the Serbian and Albanian children share the same schoolhouse. They go into different rooms through different doors, but the fact that they are in the same building is a breakthrough. On the other hand, there was an armed patrol of 16 Albanian guerillas leaving their training location, which is in an officially demilitarized zone, and that night a van was blown up, killing three Serb policemen. Passions clearly still run high.

But the facts should not frighten the United States from its duty. As General Quinlan told me, Madam Speaker, there is no military solution to this situation; but our military presence is buying the time and space for a political solution. Yes, tension in the Balkans remains high, but America can be proud of our young men and our young women as they are keeping the peace and, more important, they are proud of it. Madam Speaker, I hope that every Member here is proud of them too. I certainly am.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 51 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. STEARNS) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer: Lord, by Your light and grace, grant us vision. Sometimes when we ask vision of You, we are impelled to unlock mysteries or blinded by the future. But the vision You offer is given to help us live fully into the present moment.

Walking by faith is like walking by candlelight. You give us just enough to take our next step.

Grant us vision as a Nation that we may make the right step, at Your direction, together.

As leaders in this Congress, shed Your light upon us that people are willing to follow our lead. As representatives may we find Your people willing to move with us in the direction You guide.

Give us grateful hearts which recognize Your gift, acting in us, when we find common vision. Vision gives us hope now and forever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TRAFICANT) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. TRAFICANT led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Ms. Evans, one of his secretaries.

COMMUNICATION FROM CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means:

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, February 7, 2001.

Hon. DENNIS HASTER, Speaker, House of Representatives, The Capitol, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: I am forwarding to you the Committee's recommendations for certain designations required by law for the 107th Congress.