

brand new headquarters, which he happened to have already planned just across the street from the one that was destroyed. And though he and his employees are busy finalizing plans for the new building, while at the same time cleaning up the old, he did not forget about those other businesses in LaPlata that were destroyed and put out of business.

□ 1915

Instead, Facchina Construction began work on a "temporary town center" just hours after the powerful F5 tornado ripped through the county.

Recognizing the devastation that loss of customers could mean to his neighboring small businesses, Paul Facchina acted quickly to create a 2-acre home for them on company property in the center of LaPlata's business district. This temporary town center will consist of 21 office trailers, complete with utilities and a paved parking lot to accommodate any LaPlata business that was displaced by the tornado. On Friday after Congress adjourned, I was on the Facchina construction site. It was amazing what they had done in the 4 days since the tornado hit, plumbing being installed, pads being prepared.

And what does Mr. Facchina ask for in return for his generosity, the generosity of his company and his people? Nothing more than what a business can afford to pay. If they are not doing any business because they have been blown out of the water, so to speak, they will not pay anything. Otherwise, they will pay a commensurate lease.

Facchina Construction is no stranger to disaster response. The company was on site at the Pentagon on September 11, and crews were involved in the subsequent rescue and recovery of people in the Pentagon. Facchina headed up the restoration of the damage to the Pentagon and recently completed the project 3½ months ahead of schedule. They made it clear to the world that we have healed our physical wounds and are moving ahead with the business of this country.

Mr. Speaker, there are those who say that capitalism inevitably creates a dog-eat-dog world in which only the strong survive. Mr. Speaker, I offer to them the example of Facchina Construction and Mr. Paul Facchina. In a time of turmoil, we rely on people like this to remind us what America is about and to tell those whose lives have been turned upside down that everything will be okay.

The author said in a "Tale of Two Cities": "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Sunday, 7 p.m. a week ago was the worst of times in LaPlata, Maryland. We lost five people to that tornado; but Paul Facchina and his people and neighbors, neighbors who had been hit by the tornado, neighbors whose houses had been spared, businesses hit by the tornado came out into the streets right after that tornado passed to help their neighbors, help their community say

that they were not going to be defeated by nature, as we have not been defeated by terrorists.

Mr. Speaker, we all owe a debt of gratitude to these courageous people.

4-H IS PREMIER YOUTH DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DUNCAN). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, as a young person growing up, I had the good fortune to be a member of a 4-H club, and I rise today to recognize the centennial of 4-H clubs as one of our premier youth development organizations. Indeed, 4-H accomplishments over the past 100 years have helped developing youth to become productive citizens and are a catalyst for positive change, to meet the needs of a diverse and changing society.

Through the tireless efforts of 4-H over the past 100 years, and its sponsorship of numerous programs dedicated to developing our youth, the world is a better place. I applaud 4-H's history, and herald its future.

In the last 100 years, millions of 4-H members have raised their hand to recite the pledge: "I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living for my club, my community, my country and the world."

These words have been a blueprint for success. Millions of members have also lived by the 4-H motto: "To make the best better." Although the 4-H pledge and motto have remained basically the same over the decades, the 4-H movement has constantly sought diversity, both in its programs and participants.

Over the last 100 years: In 1902, A.B. Graham, superintendent of schools in Clark County, Ohio, organized a boys' and girls' agricultural club in Springfield Township.

1903 saw the development of corn clubs.

Pig clubs were later introduced, as were canning clubs.

Federal-State-county programs began to develop, and the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 established the Cooperative Extension Service, of which 4-H is a component.

During the 1920s and 1930s, 4-H expanded to Europe. World War II saw active participation of 4-H in the war effort. "Food for Freedom" was the slogan, and 4-H'ers were responsible for increased agriculture production.

Following World War II, international exchange programs were furthered in Europe, as well as Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

The decades of the 1960s and 1970s saw increased emphasis on participation by minorities and disadvantaged youth. In 1966, a national workshop was held in Chicago to expand 4-H for disadvantaged youth in both rural and urban areas.

In the 1980s and 1990s, 4-H focused heavily on Youth at Risk, highlighting school-age child care and education, community programming, and development of literacy and technological literacy.

4-H programs now span the gamut, touching on critical areas of our world: the environment; health, wellness and safety; workforce preparation; youth decision-making; biotechnology in agriculture; and community building.

I have been struck by the impact of these programs over the years and want to commend the University of Illinois and its agricultural extension programs. Not only are their 4-H clubs actively involved in rural communities, but its urban programming has been significant and productive.

Yes, indeed, 4-H'ers have indeed helped to improve the quality of life and to make a better world. So we proudly say when we pledge: "I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands for useful service, for better living, for myself, my club, my country and for the world." Congratulations to a great movement, the 4-H Club.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. CHRISTENSEN addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

BLUE DOG DEMOCRATS AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JOHN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. JOHN. Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to be here tonight for the next hour to talk about something that is very important to a group of individuals that I like to coalesce around here, and that is the Blue Dog Democrats.

Before I get into talking about some of the substantive things that I would like to speak about tonight, mostly fiscal responsibility, I would like to give an overview who are the Blue Dog Democrats. Members might have heard several times about our group and how active we are, but we are a group of 33 individual Members of Congress from all over the country. We come from California. We have a Member from New York, a couple of Members from Georgia and Tennessee and Texas; but we come from all over the United States geographically. But what brings us together, what has brought us together and what has really gained us a lot of credibility in this body is our focus on fiscal responsibility.

We meet every week and we talk about different issues, but we do not

get involved in issues that split us apart, that we might not be able to get a consensus on. The Blue Dogs, when we are talking about an issue, when we take an issue, we go for it in a fiscal angle and a fiscal angle only, and that is the common thread amongst all of the Blue Dogs; and I am happy to be here tonight, along with several of my colleagues, to talk about a situation that we find ourselves in that, frankly, a year ago none of us thought that we would be in.

Last year when we debated the budget, the Blue Dogs warned, and we were precluded by the majority from offering our own budget. I thought Americans in their businesses and in their families would go through the same process that the Blue Dogs went through. It was a good budget with a plan to bring some fiscal sanity and some fiscal stability in the outyears.

But yet projections were that we were going to have a \$5 trillion-plus surplus over the next 10 years. Frankly, the Blue Dogs did not buy that. We bought it as deeply as we could define projections, and we looked in the dictionary and we looked at projections, and Members know what it says. It is just that. It is numbers put together, and with reasonably good accuracy or with educated people putting them together, but they were just that. They were projections.

Of course, we find ourselves now facing a situation of 180 degrees opposite. Not only are we not talking about a surplus, and that is really the funny thing as some of our Blue Dogs would like to talk about, the fight was over on where we were going to spend this \$5 trillion. We stayed focused in that fight, not about where we were going to spend that \$5 trillion projected surplus, but how we were going to handle it. Our cry back then was paying down the national debt.

Mr. Speaker, the national debt accrues every minute that I speak, every day that goes by at astronomical numbers, numbers that we cannot envision back in south Louisiana. We have over a \$5 trillion debt that we owe this country. We pay over \$2 billion a year in interest on that debt, not principal, interest on that debt. Prior to the plus-ups of the military budget of the past few months, it was almost as much money as we were spending on defending the country is what we were paying on our debt. So the Blue Dogs wanted to spend that money, and one-third, one-third, one-third was our program. One-third for paying down the debt, one-third for tax cuts because we were for tax cuts. We thought that was healthy for the economy, and one-third for spending priorities, priorities that were important to us: prescription drugs, our military, education and other important domestic programs that are so important to the infrastructure of this great country.

□ 1930

That was our plan. That plan was spending a third, a third, and a third.

We were not successful in convincing the other side that this was the way to go. And so we have sat back and tried to revamp our plan under the new scenario that we live in today. Needs have arisen. Needs have arisen from a fiscal standpoint that we would not have even dreamed of just a few 8 months ago. We need to take care of those needs. We are spending billions of dollars.

I make no apology about voting for not only the money that we have spent in bailing out the airlines but the money we have spent in homeland security, the money we have spent on border patrol and to our law enforcement agencies all across the country. That is something we have to do. But now that we have committed ourselves to doing that, I think it is more important than ever that we put together a plan, some blueprint, some master business plan that we can follow. We are a ship afloat today without a fiscal plan.

Frankly, it makes me very nervous, it makes the Blue Dogs extremely concerned, and frankly it should make the American people a little concerned about what we are doing today in spending the money that we frankly do not have, that our surplus has gone away. We live in a credit card society. The scenario we find ourselves in today, imagine that I as a parent with my twin boys would run up thousands and thousands of dollars of credit card bills and pawn them off to my 3½-year-olds. That is what we are doing. That is how we are treating Social Security today. That is why it is important that we have a plan.

The Blue Dogs came together and put together what we think is a very elementary plan, a plan that I think works for the future of this country and a plan that really brings back what we had going in the first, the middle and the latter part of this century. We were actually running surpluses in this country, running government and actually having surpluses and we could afford to give a tax cut. We could afford to make sure that we were taking Social Security off-budget.

I do not know how many times I voted, but I know that it was more than a half a dozen of times that we voted in our Social Security lockbox. Frankly, the key has been found and we have been raiding Social Security to pay for some good expenditures but also for some other expenditures and spending that we need to get a handle on.

Let me list some of the things that we have been spending money on, and they are some good programs. Our agricultural bill, our bill passed this body last week to the tune of, oh, \$73 billion, which passed out of this bill. The energy bill that is in the process has tax implications and cost. The Department of Defense authorization bill that we are going to do tomorrow comes at a high price tag, and the supplemental appropriations bill that we are going to

deal with next week of \$29 billion. Are all these dollars that we are spending going to good causes? Yes, they are. But we cannot continue to spend and spend and tax cut and spend with no plan.

That is what I am here tonight for and that is what you will hear from the Blue Dogs that are going to talk a lot about our plan, our vision, are some kind of blueprint that we can bring ourselves back on a course, a glide path to balancing our budget, not with Social Security, to making a commitment to paying down our debt because that is so important. That is what this plan is all about. The Blue Dogs, we like to call it our ABCD plan. It is not a plan that just has a facade. It is a real plan with real legislation. I am going to highlight them very quickly, then I am going to turn over some time to my friend from northeast Texas to talk about some of these issues.

First, A, assure honesty and accountability. Enforcing the budget rules that we have today would be a very nice way to start. We have a budget. It is a nonbinding budget, but we have a budget. But we do not enforce that. We do not even look at it, to be honest with you. We have a huge fight, this side against that side, this body against that body about where we should put our money. And then once we all fight about it and it passes, the majority normally wins in this body. Then we just kind of throw it in a corner and we go on about all the other things that we intend to do and do not really blow the dust off our budget and really abide by that. So I think that that is the first thing we ought to do. The gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HILL) introduced a piece of legislation to be able to do that.

How about pay-go rules? That is the jargon up here in the Congress that may go right over the head of some people, but it is really simple. Pay-go rules basically say that you cannot spend a dollar unless you have a way to pay for it. That does not seem to be very difficult to do when we in our households, in our budget and our businesses that we put together, we figure out a way to pay for it before we spend it. I think that that is important. That is A.

B is balancing the budget without raiding Social Security, something that this body has voted on many times, something that I really truly believe in my heart that this body wants to do. We want to make sure that we can balance our budget without Social Security. We did that for the last few years. But we are headed on a path to be able to raid the Social Security Trust Fund again and again.

The gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BERRY) has introduced a bill, a constitutional amendment, which we hope that we can get a vote on this floor, that will basically amend the Constitution to require a balanced budget. It will also make sure that Congress needs a three-fifths vote to approve a

deficit or raise the debt limit. That is a whole other special order hour I think we can talk about, and doing all of that without including the Social Security Trust Fund, a constitutional amendment. Every American in this country would be for that. That is B.

C is climbing out of the deficit ditch. The debt limit was put there for a purpose, to put handcuffs on Congresses, past and future, that they cannot borrow just up to whatever the debt limit is. You get to a debt limit and it is sort of like the credit card limit on your car. If it is a thousand dollars, when you get to a thousand dollars, you cannot use that card anymore. That is what the debt limit does. The gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MOORE) basically has a piece of legislation that is going to deal with the debt limit, making sure that we abide by the debt limit.

Finally, I will end on D, something that is so simple I cannot believe that we cannot come to an agreement on trying to make this happen. If it takes a supermajority to raise taxes, why should it not take a three-fifths majority to borrow money? So if we are going to borrow money over the debt limit or borrow more money, this body should have a three-fifths vote to be able to do that. That is D.

That is the Blue Dogs' ABCD plan that we have put together. Of course, the D plan with the supermajority to borrow money is a piece of legislation that was introduced by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. TANNER). These three very simple but very important budget guidelines are something that we should enact, they are something that the Blue Dogs are going to continue to push because now is the time that we need to put a plan together. We are a Nation at war and we understand that and we are funding that, to the brave men and women around the country that are fighting the war for the freedoms to let me speak up here in the well, to let you watch this on C-SPAN, to let you do whatever you want to do and enjoy the freedoms. We are funding that. But we need a plan. We cannot continue, not today, not this hour, not next week without some kind of plan from a fiscal standpoint of how we climb out. Every economist in the world is telling us that we are going to be spending money and we are going to be running deficits.

In fact, let me draw attention to an article that was in the USA Today yesterday that talked about the debts and the looming fiscal crises that this Congress is going to have to face. It is a very good article. It is called "Fiscal Discipline Falters As Budget Deficit Grows." The gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF), a Blue Dog member, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ISRAEL) a Blue Dog member, sent out a Dear Colleague asking everyone to read this. This is what it is all about. I think they did a wonderful job at laying out exactly what has happened and not playing the blame game, not blam-

ing any one particular spending item or tax cut or the economy. It is a whole market basket of things that we have to deal with to climb our way out of it. But we cannot turn our back on it. We must have a plan. We must have a vision. That is what this plan seems to do.

With that, I will turn over as much time as he may consume to my friend the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SANDLIN).

Mr. SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Louisiana and all the members of the Blue Dogs for working so diligently on the issue of fiscal responsibility. That is what our group is about. We can have many differences of opinion in the United States Congress. We can have differences of opinion regionally within the parties, but the Blue Dogs focus completely on fiscal responsibility for our Nation. We believe that it is important that if we want to address issues in the country such as Social Security, Medicare, education, making sure that our veterans are taken care of properly, making sure that we finance the war against terrorism properly, that we have a firm financial footing, a firm financial base, and that we have a plan in effect for taking care of those obligations of the United States Government. The Blue Dogs are committed to doing that in a fiscally responsible way, which means things such as investing in areas that are important and taking care of the country's debt.

As the gentleman from Louisiana mentioned, our debt is continuing to run at an alarming rate. It is imperative upon us in the United States Congress to address the issue of debt while we continue to operate the government in a prudent manner.

As was mentioned, the Blue Dogs have a plan called the ABCs. The ABCs are something we talk about in elementary school. It really is elementary. Much of this is elementary. All we are asking is that we operate the United States Government in much the same way that Americans operate their homes and Americans operate their businesses. It is important to know what revenues are available, it is important to know what obligations are out there, and it is important to plan for unanticipated obligations. And so we have developed a plan called the ABCs. Some call it the ABCDs. We are promoting that in the United States Congress as a way to promote a plan to get us on a firm financial footing.

One of the things that we think is imperative is that we keep our commitment to senior citizens and that we maintain Social Security inviolate, that we do not use the Social Security trust funds for any purpose other than for Social Security.

Originally the Blue Dogs came up with a plan that we felt should be supported by the entire United States Congress, because it made a lot of sense. Of course, as we know, that is not always the test in Washington. Something

that makes a lot of sense is always suspect. But our first and our initial approach at a concerned and conservative and fiscally responsible budget was to take the Social Security trust funds completely off-budget, completely off-budget, not to be used for any other purpose.

Next we wanted to look at what I call for discussion purposes the operating budget of the United States Congress. We wanted to take the operating budget, look at it and determine if we had an operating surplus. With that operating surplus, we wanted one-half of that surplus to go immediately to the country's debt, to pay down the obligations that this government and this country have already incurred. We wanted one-fourth, then, to go to tax relief for American families. American families work hard. American families pay taxes. American families try and invest in their families, in education, in their senior citizens. We felt one-fourth available for tax cuts would help American families. Then the remaining one-fourth would be used for investment in critical areas such as agriculture, education, veterans, unanticipated expense such as we are facing right now with the war on terrorism.

Later as our policy developed, as the gentleman from Louisiana mentioned, we talked about a division of one-third, one-third, one-third. But most of our pleas have fallen on deaf ears. Most of the time people in this body are not willing to make a plan. We vote independently. Each vote is independent. There is no long-term plan. There is no matching of revenue and obligation, and fiscal responsibility seems to take a back seat.

Last year we were facing surpluses as far as the eye could see and we were worried last year, believe it or not, about paying off our debt too quickly.

□ 1945

Now, in less than a year's time, we have seen a dramatic reversal of this once promising budgetary outlook, and we now face a projection of deficits and increasing debt for the rest of the decade. These are debts that we will be placing on the backs of the children of this country.

Now, obviously some of this is due to the economic slowdown; some is due directly to the September 11 disaster; some is due to the continuing expense of the war on terrorism. But regardless of the source of these deficits, Congress and the President need to sit down, roll up our sleeves and have an honest discussion about what we need to do to get our budget back in order, to bring fiscal responsibility to the United States. If we do not, we risk burdening our children and our grandchildren with the consequences of today's irresponsible budgetary decisions.

Further, we risk jeopardizing Social Security and Medicare, a critical and important source of security for our senior citizens.

Now, the Blue Dog Coalition has outlined four solutions to the budget problem, as mentioned by the gentleman

from Louisiana, and I am not going to go into those in any detail since he has mentioned them, but it is an elementary approach to fiscal responsibility. I think it is important, as the gentleman said, to look at pay-go, the pay-as-you-go or the pay-go rules which expire this year, and we would renew and extend the pay-go rules by establishing new 5-year discretionary caps, with separate caps for defense and nondefense spending. It would also require that any increases in mandatory spending be offset. We believe it should be more difficult to delay costs outside of the 5-year budget windows, thus making sure that we truly understand in the Congress and account for the costs of the legislation that we as a Congress are passing. That is responsibility. We need to know what the legislation that we pass costs and how it will be paid for. What could be any more elementary than that?

Now, as part of the ongoing honesty, and assuring honesty and accountability, we would require that the President conduct a thorough review of the war on terrorism and the costs associated with homeland security, and we would be willing to work with the President on plans in that way.

A is for accountability, as was mentioned, and we believe that we have to provide a framework, we have to be accountable, we have to show that the Federal Government can ensure and promise that the government is not jeopardizing the future of the children of this great Nation.

B is for the balanced budget. If we really want to get our fiscal house in order, if we are serious about this in the United States Congress, we need to start by requiring the President to submit to the United States Congress a balanced budget, and that balanced budget importantly has to include this feature for America. We need to balance the budget with a budget that does not tap into the Social Security Trust Fund, period. We have to get that done.

Now, our balanced budget proposal recognizes that in times of war or other threats to national security, sometimes it is necessary for the government to temporarily run budget deficits to ensure the safety of our Nation, the safety of our citizens, to make sure that our servicemen and service women across the world and across this country are provided for properly; that they have the best technology, the best equipment, the best training, the best leadership, the best that we can provide for our freedom fighters all across the world. Now, no cost is too great, but we cannot abandon the promise we made to senior citizens.

Mr. Speaker, senior citizens built this country. They have survived World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf. They have built this country, and they have seen good times and bad. They have lived the American dream. They

get up in the morning, they make a sandwich and they put it in a pail and they go to work and they make a product that is put out in the market that supports this great economy, sends our kids to school and supports our senior citizens. We need to reward people in this country that work hard and play by the rules. We tell people, "work hard, play by the rules, be responsible," and now it is our turn to be responsible and make sure that when those folks do that, that we do not abandon our senior citizens, the very people that made this country great and turned over to us the freest and best society that the world has ever seen.

Now, this year the President has pushed a budget that claims to be in balance, only because it taps into the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds. That is the only reason it is in balance. I believe that to be irresponsible. We cannot balance the budget on the backs of senior citizens.

We believe that it is our fiscal responsibility to raise the debt limit only if we have a plan, only if we have a plan. Mr. Speaker, it is not irresponsible to say, before raising the debt, before making that decision, let us identify where we are, let us identify where we are going, the goal that we need to reach, why we need to get there, how we need to get there, and how we are going to get out of it. That is a plan. While certainly it might be necessary to do that, we want a plan and we would support raising the limit only if we had a plan.

Now, Congress will review budget estimates from CBO, the Congressional Budget Office, in August, and using those budget projections, we would require the President to submit a new budget to the Congress that balances the budget within 5 years without using the Social Security surplus. That is a part of the plan. Do we need to raise the debt, the debt ceiling, the limit? Maybe, if we have a plan. Do we need to look at all of the numbers from the Congressional Budget Office? Certainly, we do. And we need a budget that does not invade Social Security.

Last year, or I guess it was in 1997; it seems like last year, but in 1997 we passed the Balanced Budget Act. It was a great bipartisan effort. We had people from both sides of the aisle, Democrats and Republicans, from all regions of the country supporting the Balanced Budget Act and the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997. It was a great bipartisan victory for this House. At the time the whip on the other side of the aisle said that we need, from the beginning of this Congress, that we want to negotiate with the President, but we cannot negotiate with a President who does not want a balanced budget.

I think that was wise and sage advice, and we hope that wise and sage advice will continue now as we negotiate with the administration and say, we want to negotiate, but we want to negotiate with someone that wants to

balance the budget and we want to balance the budget without invading Social Security and Medicare. We agree with that approach.

The House, as was mentioned, is going to look at the possibility of raising the debt limit and borrowing more money, as the gentleman from Louisiana mentioned, and we propose a supermajority, or a three-fifths vote, as the gentleman indicated, for such an action. We believe that to be reasonable, we believe that to be proper, and we believe that to be the way that this House can focus on the seriousness of that issue. We hope that the Congress will take that matter of increasing the debt very seriously.

Finally, let me mention one other thing that D could stand for, other than what the gentleman from Louisiana mentioned. D is for debt prevention. Not only do we need to reduce debt in this country and pay off our debt and be responsible, we need to prevent debt in the future. We cannot overstate the importance of taking care of our responsibilities and getting our fiscal house back in order. The principles that were outlined by the gentleman from Louisiana and the other Blue Dogs that have worked so hard on this issue would help rein in fiscal responsibility and ensure that we secure our children's future.

Mr. JOHN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for laying out very eloquently the position of the Blue Dogs and also for giving a little background of where we need to go. The underlying message is that we need a plan, and the Blue Dogs have this plan.

Mr. Speaker, I yield now to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. PHELPS) to talk further about the Blue Dog plan and our position.

Mr. PHELPS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Louisiana, and I thank the gentleman from Texas who just spoke. I wholeheartedly agree with my colleagues here this evening. While we may be repeating some of the same concepts and principles that we believe wholeheartedly in as an organization, the Blue Dogs, I hope folks take it within their consideration, because if we do not repeat what is important over and over, sometimes it is not taken in as it should be, so forgive us if we become too repetitive, but we are trying to do our best to emphasize what is important.

We are here tonight when Congress is out of session; we have adjourned for the night. But we have continued to try to be here, missing our dinners and other social events that we, quite frankly, like to go to and get some business done too, but we believe enough in what we are emphasizing tonight to sacrifice that time to make sure, before this session is over and this Congress adjourns for the year, that we have done our best to try to indicate to the American people the true picture of the situation and how we think it should be resolved.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my fellow Blue Dogs for their comments and for giving me this opportunity to speak out on such an important issue. I want to focus my time in discussing the Blue Dog plan for putting the budget back in order, starting with fiscal discipline. The Blue Dogs have consistently focused on fiscal discipline, having advocated honesty and responsibility in the budgeting process.

When Congress considered the budget last year, the Blue Dogs warned of the danger of making long-term commitments for tax cuts or new spending programs based on projected surpluses, really unrealistic projection of surpluses. In less than a year's times, here we have a dramatic reversal of the once promising budgetary outlook. We now face projections of deficits and increasing debt for the rest of the decade that go far beyond the temporary impact of the economic downturn or cost of the war on terrorism. Congress and the President need to sit down, have an honest, open discussion about what we need to do to put the budget back in order, starting with the ABCs of fiscal discipline, which is what we are trying to outline tonight.

My wife and I have raised four lovely children. We still have our youngest at home, who is just finishing his junior year at the University of Southern Illinois, the university that both my wife and I have graduated from, and he is taking his exams this week, so I hope he is out there studying. Our three daughters are married and working. My wife and I worked very hard in trying to communicate to our children, and through an example ourselves, how we ran the household when they were able and old enough to observe and know what was going on, and we reiterated over and over to be very careful on how you develop your spending habits. You do not squander what you do not have. You do not promise your friends and other people you will participate in activities when you know you do not have the means to participate. These are tough lessons in life, probably the toughest, but I am happy to say that they are fiscally responsible young people.

So I feel like my wife and I have been somewhat successful at this point. We know that some of the problems in marriages can stem from financial problems, and unless you work as a team as a married couple, committed to making and meeting your debts, and working and raising the money to meet your expenses, as part of growing stronger together and building an economy of your own, that also transfers into the economy of your community, of your State and of your Nation. How you are going to pay for the most important things, the priority things, the necessities, your utility bills. One cannot live without water and power and transportation to travel back and forth to work. Take care of those things first, the necessities. That is what we taught, and I am happy to say they

were intelligent enough and cooperative enough to be young people that have come now to be young married couples, soon to teach their children, and I have one grandchild, who will be learning, as he is four years old now.

As a legislator, I travel and talk to schools and am a former teacher, and my wife is a teacher. Our family has invested heavily in education. One of the things I try to emphasize when I am talking to young people, students, is I am trying to explain who I am as a Congressman. I am a legislator; I am a law maker. I legislate.

□ 2000

To legislate, what does that mean? The proper definition, if we will look it up, is to transfer the public's will into public policy.

Now, what is the will of the American people? I honestly believe the people that I have met and known in this body that I serve with today and people who served in the past that I did not get to know, I honestly believe they know the will of their districts. They know what the people really count as priority, what is important, what is most important.

There are a lot of things that we hold important that are never, maybe, within our means to be able to address fully and wholeheartedly as we would like.

But to transfer the public's will into public policy is a great responsibility. Part of that responsibility, and now I have grown to know that the biggest responsibility, is what we do with the money that we have been entrusted to handle, that we collect from people that are working every day, like the coal miner in my district that takes his lunch bucket and goes down in the bowels of the earth. Many of my friends have never returned from there. It is a dangerous occupation.

Or it is the farmers who are trying to feed us. Farming is a high-risk line of duty, one of the most unhealthy occupations in the Nation, the family farmer.

But the Blue Dogs have outlined four solutions to avoid leaving our children and grandchildren with the consequences of today's irresponsible budgeting solutions. Here are the ABCs.

A is ensuring that there is honesty and accountability; budget enforcement, in other words. Unless we renew our budget discipline, Congress will continue to find ways to break its own rules and pass more legislation that puts still more red ink on the national ledger.

Enforceable budget constraints, restraints, will shine a light on deceptive practices and construct a fiscal guard-rail, keeping our spending within the Nation's fiscal means.

As my colleague, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SANDLIN) said, those out there who work hard and play by the rules, they should expect us to follow them; even our own rules, which, from the parliamentary standpoint, with all

the specifics of what goes on here in this process, are probably not clear to many. Many of these are not clear to me. Even when they are, I am wondering if we would recognize the same ones on the same page, the wording and how it is interpreted.

But it is time that we lay everything out on the table, leave nothing off, just like we ask our families to do. I have told my children, do not count some expenses or some funds that are coming in twice. Some things are for certain things, certain important priorities: the utilities, for example, that I mentioned. Those are identified. We must lay those aside and at least put an approximate, sometimes a detailed and very predictable, expense that they can expect every month. I do not think we are surprised by what we know we have to pay for here.

So we have to be able to reconcile within ourselves what the rules are, enforce them, and ensure honesty and accountability.

B is balancing the budget without raiding Social Security. A balanced budget constitutional amendment, that makes sense to me. We must vote on a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution that requires the President to submit and Congress to enact a budget that is in balance, without using or raiding the Social Security surplus.

The amendment could be waived in times of war, of course, military conflict, or other threats to national security. Even that is pretty broad, because what some people might classify as national security, or the administration, that is what we deliberate on here, to see if we agree. But surely a majority out of 435 people, and 100 over in the other Chamber, with a President who makes pretty close to the same pledges and promises if they want to be elected or reelected, surely that cannot be too far off the bubble, I would not think, unless we are changing the rules after we get elected and do not want to face up to what we promised.

This includes excluding the Social Security trust funds. Balancing the budget is meaningless if we borrow from our children, and just go to our parties and play golf and have our fun, and tell the American people that things could be looking better: "Look up, let us be positive."

Members are not talking to anybody who is even halfway near pessimistic. I do not accept defeat or anything that is presented to me with doubt if I know I have done my best within my power. How in the world can the American people expect us to be looking them straight in the eye and saying that we are doing our best when we are willingly adding more debt to the debt that we are not even being honest about?

Sure, there are unforeseen expenses that come our way, such as the national security, terrorism, and recession, but we have a tendency to underplay what we want to and exaggerate what we want to just to sell what we

know cannot be accomplished in a certain realm of time, within the election proximity of time. When does reality finally strike what body of elected people? Will honesty and reality finally come to the surface and say, I cannot account for all those generations back there, and those decades of politicians, but I can tell you what I know? That is who I want to serve with, someone who will step forward and be counted.

A debt limit with a plan. Blue Dogs believe Congress has a responsibility to cover obligations through the end of the fiscal year September 30, 2002, and that is coming up pretty quick, but that raising the debt limit by \$750 billion as requested by the President is pretty risky business, in my way of thinking.

First, the President and Congress must create a plan to put our fiscal house back in order, just as the family facing financial problems must work with their bank to establish a framework, a financial plan, in order to get approval to refinance their debts.

But do Members know what they have to do before they can refinance their debts or begin their plan? The biggest word I know of: acknowledge that there is a problem, acknowledge that one is wrong.

I have heard our preacher say in our pulpit that one of the biggest words, misused words, is the fact that many of us want to say, oh, I made mistakes and I stubbed my toe, and I have done this or that. I wish I had it to do over. They leave out the word "sin," from a religious context. They do not want to acknowledge within their own lives what they have control over themselves that is going on wrong in their lives.

Do Members know what is going to happen to that person who has gone too far with alcohol or anything else? Unless they acknowledge it, they will never be able to control it or to come up with a solution, or have a plan; to be in that Alcoholics Anonymous, to change their lives in their own faith, because they have not acknowledged who they are down deep, what they have done. They have tried to sugarcoat it by saying, "I sure have made some mistakes." That is from a secular standpoint.

I might have said something wrong to somebody, maybe not guarding my words or not being as courteous. That is a mistake. But it is going deeper than that. Climbing out of the deficit ditch is going to take strong, courageous people to step forward acknowledging the problem.

Finally, defending our children from paying our bills, and having a supermajority to borrow money. All too often Congress and the President have been unwilling to make tough choices to balance our priorities, and have chosen to leave future generations to pay the bill for policies which benefit the current generation by increasing borrowing. Making it harder for Congress to borrow money by requiring a super-

majority will protect the rights of future generations who are not represented in our political system, but will bear the burden of our decisions today.

That is where we are at, that crossroads. Can we just do the simple ABCs? We cannot even put a word together or communicate or learn to read unless we know our ABCs.

I want to tell the Members something: the Blue Dogs know our ABCs. I hope we can convince enough of our colleagues to step up and eat that alphabet, even if it is the cereal of the morning. If they are on the floor trying to defeat or at least debate with me as a member of the Blue Dogs, I am telling the Members, I am ready to face them.

If they have different figures than the CBO or any other fiscal commission can tell us, if they do, let us sit down here together in the light of day and say who is wrong. And whoever it is, let us fire them, or we are paying them too much if they are not giving us the right kind of information that we all can drive this Nation to the right course.

Mr. JOHNS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Illinois for laying out what I believe is the best plan. It is a plan to get us back to where we really need to go.

Why do we need a plan? We talk about a lot of things in this Congress, but one of the most important things that we do is allocating dollars in the budget process and authorizing and appropriating, because that is where our priorities lie. They lie in where we put our money.

That is why it is important to have a budget that makes sense, that is not a deceitful one in any way, or with smoke and mirrors, but a budget plan that makes sense. I think it is really important, because let me give the fiscal roller coaster ride in a real broad picture about where we have come from over the last very few short months, it seems like. I will try to be very nontechnical, because it is not very difficult to understand.

Last year, the CBO projected that the government would run a unified surplus of \$5.6 trillion over the next 10 years, trillion with a T, and \$3.4 trillion of that surplus was going to be excluded from Social Security. So we were dealing with \$3.4 trillion over 10 years of money that we could or we were going to deal with for surpluses.

Actually, during the budget debate last year, as the Blue Dogs were moving forward in trying to make sure and drive home the message of paying down our debt, a lot of my colleagues on the other side of the fence were talking about, hold on, we do not want to pay off our debt too fast.

Boy, did that not happen. Less than 12 months later, the debt held by the public is increasing. Last year, Congress and the President agreed time after time after time again to put a lockbox around Social Security so that

these new projections that show promise now, so that we would never go back into the Social Security trust fund.

But now today, May of 2002, less than 1 year or just a little over a year from all of these projections, the government is projected to run, listen to this, Mr. Speaker, a deficit that will require the government to use Social Security and Medicare money from the trust funds for the rest of the decade. Those are not my words, those are the CBO's, the experts and the guys that do this for a living. They said for the next decade, and it is only 2002, Mr. Speaker, so that is the fiscal picture that we have painted ourselves into. That does not even count the continued war on terrorism, the continued homeland security, and other very important programs that this Congress I know is going to want to put at the front lines.

What does this mean? This means a higher debt. We spend nearly 14 percent of our Federal dollars, 14 percent of our Federal budget goes to the interest on our debt. I mentioned a little while ago that it is over \$230 billion a year in interest. But for those who are percentage buffs and pie chart people, 14 percent of our budget goes to paying off the debt that we have incurred, something that we could have started to pay down over the last few years.

Even the experts agree that spending this money on interest, and we all know what that is; it is not unlike, or in fact, it is exactly the same as the little line item that we have on our credit cards when we do not pay the balance off that says finance cost, interest cost on the money that we spent that we did not pay back over a year cycle. So that puts it in the context of our everyday occurrences. It takes away from the money that we could be using to pay down the debt, that we could be using in one of the most important issues that we need to address in Congress: educating the children, the next generation, the next Members of Congress, the next people who will protect this country. Also, it is health care, prescription drugs.

By continuing not to focus on paying down our debt, it takes money away from the things that are so very important.

□ 2015

But the most important, I believe, problem that this causes, when we talked about tax cut and many of us including myself voted for President Bush's tax cut, it was August of last year when we voted on the tax cut. The economy was starting to slow and sputter a little bit. September 11 had not happened just yet. And our life changed a month from that, but many of us voted for these tax cuts. Some of us voted for them and, of course, did not like some of the areas that we were cutting. I thought we could do better in spurring our economy and putting money back in other areas. But it was a package.

This is Congress. There are 435 people, and I think it was an okay deal that we dealt with. But as we moved out of this tax cut and moving into the areas of having to pay debt, increase our debt and look at deficits, we have to reevaluate some of the things we need to do. And one of the things, the biggest drag on our economy is debt payment and deficits. I think that that is agreed to by many economists, and I think that is very important. And what does that do in the whole ball game? Because I believe the most important tax cut that we could possibly have that everyone enjoys is keeping interest rates low; interest rates on your house, interest rates on your credit cards, interest rates on your auto loans. And that is what I think we need to continue to be mindful of as we move through, I think, a very, very, very important and critical crossroads as we are starting to develop the 2003 appropriations bills and the other bills that we are going to be dealing with for spending.

But I think it is important that we have a plan, a plan that puts fiscal handcuffs on us, to save us from ourselves sometimes when we are having to spend and wanting to make sure that we are providing the best kind of services for our constituents back home, whether it is roads or education or health care or veterans' benefits. But at the same time trying to do it in a very frugal way to make sure that we are spending the taxpayers dollars the best we possibly can. And that is what the Blue Dog plan does. It has been laid out very nicely tonight by my friend, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SANDLIN), and my friend, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. PHELPS).

And maybe just to recap it very quickly because my time is running out, it is again the ABC's. It is honesty and accountability in budgeting. It is balancing the budget without raiding Social Security. It is climbing out of the deficit ditch by making sure that we have limits and abide by those limits; and, D, of course, is defending children from paying our bills and our debts that we are accumulating over these few years, and that would require a supermajority to borrow dollars. So those are the ABC's the Blue Dogs are going to continue to push until we get a plan together that makes sense, that brings us into the next century, that brings us through this war time and times of great difficulty as we are having to deal with issues we did not dream of dealing with just a few months ago.

I thank the Speaker for this very lively hour of debate, and I just beg that the American people and the majority and this Congress look at the Blue Dog plan, take it for what it is worth. It is not just rhetoric. We have bills that are in the hopper that identify the ABC's of how we get out, bring fiscal sanity back into this Congress.

SUPPORTING THE UNITED STATES LEAVING THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GRUCCI). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. MCINNIS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to our discussion this evening. There are a couple of things I want to talk about. But first of all, I think it is important to address some of the comments that have been just made in the last hour.

First of all, we ought to point out that the Blue Dogs who spent the last hour criticizing the administration, criticizing the majority party, never bring out in these comments that the Blue Dogs, in fact, are all Democrats. This last hour was a very partisan, one-sided point of view. This is exactly why we run into budget difficulties.

Now, I agreed with some of the points that were brought up by these gentlemen. But I was amazed to hear these gentlemen, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. PHELPS), the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SANDLIN), and the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JOHN), talk about how we have to control spending. We have got to stop the pork. We have to make sure we, as the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JOHN) said, lay everything out on the table. We have got to watch these spending programs that are outrageous.

So I was curious. I decided to see how all three of these gentlemen voted on the farm bill, which is probably the biggest budget buster we have had up here in a long, long time. Now, clearly, somebody who spends an hour advocating a balanced budget, who spends an hour advocating these so-called Blue Dog ABC's about avoiding pork, about accountability and honesty in government, about voting here as you talk to your constituents back there, certainly you would expect that these gentlemen would be the first to stand up to a bill like the farm bill which, although it has a nice-sounding name, helps very few farmers in this country. It helps a lot of corporate farmers in this country. And take a look at where this bill started; take a look at where it started and where it ended up.

How many billions of dollars more were added to it as it went through these Chambers? So you would expect these three gentlemen to, of course, vote "no" on a project like this. But all three of these gentlemen who spent the last hour attacking the administration, who spent the last hour attacking the majority understand this Blue Dog which means Democrat concept, all three of them voted for that program. All three of them voted for "yes" on what is, and I say it again, the largest budget buster we will have up here this year.

Now, look, maybe their constituents wanted them to vote that way and maybe they are representing their con-

stituents. I am assuming they probably are. If they come from a farm community maybe they are. But for gosh sakes, do not vote one way and talk the other way.

I once had somebody tell me, if you want to stay elected in Congress, especially when you get outside the Northeast where it is solid Democrat, but out where most of the country is and that is moderate to conservative, go ahead and vote liberal in Washington but when you come home vote conservative. Go ahead and talk about a balanced budget when you are back in your district, but at the same time make sure you bring the pork home. And in my opinion that is what has been reflected in the last hour.

So if you want to talk about accountability, if you want to talk about lay everything out on the table, my three colleagues should have probably said, oh, by the way, the only exception we have to the comments and the attacks we are making on the majority party, the only real exception we have that does not apply to our rules that we have just told you about for a balanced budget and fiscal responsibility is our own farm bill. Now, understand we are going to vote for our farm bill, but aside from that everything else ought to be scrutinized.

That is the problem back here. I mean, all of us, that is where you have got your problem. But I have sat here for the last hour, most of the last hour, and was amazed that first of all my colleagues stand up and make it sound as if they are some independent organization out here when, in fact, your Blue Dogs are comprised solely of Democrats and the attack was solely against the Republican majority. It was a partisan hour. That is fair game. That is what the House floor is for: debate. But somebody has got to stand up and say, wait a minute, just as they said should be done, let us lay everything on the table.

And that is why I was curious and went back and looked at the actual voting record to see how one would speak on the floor but how one would vote outside the presence of the speech that they were giving. And I saw an inherent conflict. In other words, the vote that was taken on the farm bill certainly did not at any point in time in the last hour match the comments of the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. PHELPS), the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SANDLIN), or the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JOHN). And they are all gentlemen. Do not get me wrong, they are colleagues of mine. They are professionals. I would assume they represent their districts well.

My point here is not an attack on these three individuals. But I believe in what they are saying and that is accountability. And if you are going to talk about a balanced budget; if you are going to talk about getting rid of pork; if you are going to talk about avoiding budget buster bills, then you ought to talk about that farm bill. And