

the future for all of our countries, whether you are in NATO or not. This time around it was the United States of America. It was New York. It was Washington, DC. Next time it might be Paris or next time maybe a terrorist attack in the country of Luxembourg or, God forbid, some other place in this world.

We need to stick together as a team. This is not the time to pound on the United States, as Colin Powell has said. It is time to recognize who the enemy is, to acknowledge to the American people and to all world people who that enemy is, and to do something about the enemy. It is time to get a rope around that wild horse and bring it in. This cancer that is spreading throughout the world must be stopped, and it is not going to be stopped through weak knees. It is only going to be stopped through teamwork, through dedication, and, frankly, through sacrifice.

The sacrifice reflected in the last few hours by the loss of American soldiers is exactly the kind of medicine that unfortunately is going to be necessary to take that cancer off that body. So let me, in conclusion of my remarks, just repeat what I said earlier, and these are the remarks of the brother of Chief Warrant Officer Stanley Harriman, who was killed in action in the last few hours, here is what his brother says; and this is how I conclude my remarks this evening: His brother Steve said that he hoped the military, and I add to that NATO and all our allies throughout the world, he hoped the military would not flinch in pursuing military operations to their conclusion. Stan would not have changed it if he could. He would have done it the same way. Steve said, I hope they continue to do what they say they are going to do, to complete the mission.

Our military, with our support, and the administration, which is doing an outstanding job of leading this effort, must be allowed to complete the mission, to protect the freedom of the world and democracy as we know it.

#### THE BUDGET AND THE DEBT CEILING INCREASE

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

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, this will be another in a series of 1-hours that the so-called Blue Dog Coalition is taking to focus on the budget, to focus on the request of the administration to raise our debt ceiling by \$750 billion. We want to continue to talk about this.

I want to make it very, very clear that we, the Blue Dogs, are willing to support a temporary increase in the debt limit to meet the expenses of the war and to allow government to meet its obligations; but we suggest holding

off on a long-term increase in the debt ceiling until we have a plan in place to return our country and our fiscal affairs to balance.

□ 2000

I remind everyone that it was less than a year ago that we stood and debated on this floor of the House the economic game plan that we were going to follow for the next year and the next 10 years. I remind everyone just briefly that the Blue Dogs felt that we ought to be conservative with the \$5.6 trillion projected surplus just in case it was not real, just in case something of an emergency nature might occur, just in case those who projected that surplus might be wrong.

We suggested that we ought to take half of that \$5.6 trillion projected surplus and pay down the debt. We were told by our friends on the other side of the aisle and the administration that they were concerned about paying down the debt too quickly.

Well, I do not know where they got that information, but now all of a sudden the President's budget that he has submitted to the Congress this year projects deficits and the utilization of the Social Security trust fund for the next 10 years. I repeat. The President's budget proposes using Social Security trust fund dollars for the next 10 years. That is the economic game plan that we are under tonight.

The Blue Dogs are suggesting that we ought to sit back, the Congress and the President, and our friends on the other side of the aisle need to sit back and roll up our sleeves and have an honest discussion about what we need to do to put our budget back in order. We need to have a serious discussion with everything on the table. The preceding speaker opened his remarks in just that vein, and there are a large number of Democrats who are willing to sit down and try to put our fiscal house back in order, but that offer has to be extended and so far it has not.

The bottom line tonight is that we are being asked to increase our debt ceiling by \$750 billion. That means we are going to have to borrow or it is suggested that we need to borrow that amount of money. In the conduct of the war, we are perfectly willing, if that should be the decision of the President, to borrow the money to fight the war.

There are some that suggest that maybe, just maybe, we ought to consider paying for it, because when we borrow it today we are saying that this generation does not wish to pay for that which we are enjoying, but we are perfectly willing to send that obligation to our children and grandchildren. That is part of the discussion that we wish that we were having on this floor tonight.

We have made it very clear we are willing to participate in a meaningful dialogue, a meaningful debate in which we can have ideas and suggestions put forward as to how we get from where

we are to where we need to be. Where we are today is we are back into deficit spending. We are back into spending the Social Security trust funds when after I think last year five times, five times we voted on this floor unanimously a lockbox on the Social Security trust fund. I guess we did not mean it.

The Blue Dogs when we were on the floor last year talking about the economic game plan that we suggested not only suggested that we ought to take that \$5.6 trillion surplus and devote half of it to paying down the debt, 25 percent of it to cutting taxes, and 25 percent of it to be spent on the priorities of this Nation.

What were those priorities? Fixing Social Security, fixing Medicare, dealing with prescription drugs, dealing with the educational problems of this country. We believe and still believe that we could do what we needed to do with that amount of revenue, and then we proposed cutting taxes with 25 percent of that projected surplus.

Well, we lost. We came up 14 votes short, I believe was the number. And under our system of government, when you lose, you go on to the next round.

Well, here we are into the next round being asked to increase the debt ceiling by 750 billion additional dollars. We say, whoa, let us not do that much at one time. Let us not admit that this body is not capable of working with the other body and working with the President and putting our fiscal house back in order and balancing our budget at a time certain. We are perfectly willing to deal with spending caps, with pay-go so long as everything is put on the table so we might have an open and honest dialogue and then get a vote on the issues in which we are concerned.

Now what does the debt ceiling mean to the average person watching us tonight? I know many times when you listen to us you get very confused. But, basically, it is a businessman going to their lender. It is a student going to their parents, having run up a \$6,000 credit card bill. Of course, the parents will pay because they do not want the kid's credit damaged in the long run, but they will work out the arrangement that includes reducing the allowance, getting a part-time job, and getting promises for less partying, et cetera.

The worse thing that we are doing with our accumulated Federal debt is the reverse of this scenario. Parents are going to the students with their bills and expecting the youths to pay for their elders' irresponsible consumption. A businessman that reaches his credit limit at his bank needs to go to his banker and say, I need to borrow additional money, I have this great investment potential, I have got this great idea, and you convince your banker that you have a plan that will pay him back not only what you have borrowed up to this point but also will pay back that which you are intending to borrow in upping your credit limit.

That is what we are trying to focus on tonight as Blue Dogs, a plan. If Members want to increase the debt ceiling, tell us how they are going to get the budget back into balance in a time certain and in a short time. The economic plan that we are under tonight says 10 years. Ten years we will stay in the Social Security surplus; and then, remember, baby boomers begin to retire in 2008. 2008, that is not very far from tonight. In 2011, we begin to have the baby boomers retiring in earnest. That is not very long. We cannot afford to continue to go into the Social Security trust fund without coming up with a plan for how we are going to fix Social Security and Medicare for the future. That is what we are going to be talking about tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BERRY), another one of the true leaders of the Blue Dog Coalition. He has been focusing not only on budget but health care matters and on agricultural matters.

Mr. BERRY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time. I appreciate the gentleman's great leadership in this House of Representatives over many years. Almost from the beginning, he has been a great champion of fiscal responsibility. He was one of the founders of the Blue Dogs, and fiscal responsibility is our hallmark, and we are very proud of it.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot begin to tell you this evening how heartbroken I am that we are here on this floor yet again tonight to talk about the fact that this country simply cannot live within its means. It is a heart-breaking thing to know that we continue to run up bills, borrow money, pass the debt on to our children and grandchildren and tell the American people everything is all right, do not worry about it. That is what is going on.

Mr. Speaker, I have to ask: When is this going to stop? How long are we going to allow this to go on? When I came into this House in 1997, that was the last time we had a vote to raise the debt ceiling. We worked hard to create a situation where we would have money to pay off the debt that this generation has accumulated, and we have nothing to show for it.

We worked hard in this House to get a balanced budget and to accumulate a little bit of a surplus and to create a situation where we would have the ability to pay off this debt. Just a year ago, in a Blue Dog meeting, the gentleman that is the director of the Office of Management and Budget, the President's bookkeeper, the President's accountant, came to the Blue Dogs, and I will never ever forget his statement. He said, our greatest fear is that we will have so much money that we will pay off all of the debt, and no one will have a safe place to invest their money because you will not be able to buy a United States treasury bond.

I almost embarrassed myself by laughing out loud right in front of him. I thought it was the most ridiculous

statement I had ever heard because his plan was to create the situation that we have today. He told the Blue Dogs we are not interested, count us out when you talk about taking this surplus and taking half of it and paying down the debt because we do not want any part of that.

We said, let us take a fourth of it and reduce taxes. We thought we should do something about the marriage tax penalty and the estate tax, and I still think we should have. Then we said, let us take a fourth of it and deal with some disparate spending priorities that we feel that we need to deal with. To achieve the balanced budget and the surplus that we had at that time, we had basically train-wrecked the senior citizens health care system because we have created a situation where the health care providers in this country are not going to continue to provide health care to our seniors for the small amount of reimbursement that they get. They are just not going to do it. We are about to ruin the health care system in this country for our seniors. We do not have any money for prescription drug benefits.

We wrote a farm bill to try to balance the budget that bankrupted the entire agricultural community of this country and has cost us far more than we ever intended or a responsible farm bill would have cost us had we done it right.

The long-term interest rates in this country have not gone down, even though we have done everything that we know to do to try to drive them down, and that is an indication that Wall Street and the world's financiers do not want any part of this.

□ 2015

They know that we are borrowing money that we cannot pay back. They know that we are passing an economic burden on to our children and grandchildren that they cannot bear.

What is going to happen? We have already spent all of the Social Security trust fund. We have spent all the Medicare trust fund. All the money is gone. And now we are being asked to raise the ceiling on the amount of money above that that we can borrow: "Let's spend all the money we can get our hands on and then borrow some more to go with it." And what are we going to have to show for it? Nothing. We have not built a road. We have not built a school. We cannot point to anything that we have accomplished.

Mr. Speaker, I carry this buckeye in my pocket. It is a relatively worthless little nut off a small bush in Arkansas. The squirrels will eat it sometimes. Nothing else will. Folklore has it that if you take that little nut and carry it in your pocket and rub it just right with your thumb, the oil from your skin will make it shiny and the shinier it gets, the better your health will be. It will protect you from rheumatism. It will protect you against all kind of evil spirits. And it will bring you good

health. Mr. Speaker, that is what the Medicare system is going to look like in 15 years, because we have squandered the opportunity to make Medicare and Social Security whole and make sure that they are here so that our children and grandchildren do not get stricken by a horrible tax burden.

Let me read to you what the GAO Comptroller General, David Walker, said just a few days ago: "Absent substantive reform of the entitlement programs, a rapid escalation of Federal spending for Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid beginning less than 10 years from now is virtually certain to overwhelm the rest of the Federal budget."

We are not going to be able to do anything but pay for Social Security and Medicare and pay the interest on the national debt. That is not a secure Nation. It is not a responsible Nation. It is something that we should not allow to happen. The Blue Dogs are overwhelmingly in favor of doing whatever we have to do to fight the war and the recession. But we are not willing to give the administration, or anyone else, a blank check and say, go borrow all the money you want to borrow, pass the debt on to our children and grandchildren and not even have a plan as to how we are going to deal with it. They do not even want to talk about a plan. They just say, just keep borrowing money, just keep cutting taxes more and more, and hope for the best. This same Comptroller General makes the comment that you cannot grow economically fast enough to take care of this problem once it reaches that particular spot that he was talking about.

It is time for us as a Nation and it is time for this House and this Congress to be responsible and sit down and work together for a plan that will provide for the responsible fiscal operation of this country.

Mr. STENHOLM. I thank my friend from Arkansas for those remarks. I want to remind everyone now what we are all about tonight. We are saying that to increase our debt ceiling without a plan for getting us back into balance is irresponsible. We are prepared to vote to increase the debt ceiling short term. We do not want to see our country default on its debt. We do not want that; no one wants that. But we do believe it is irresponsible for us to blindly follow an economic game plan that has squandered \$5 trillion of surpluses without first dealing with the problems of Social Security and Medicare. We think that is irresponsible. And we hope that as a majority of this House puts together their budget, this year we would hope that we could be a part of it.

We are here tonight saying that if you participate in a budget process that gives us a plan to get us back into balance in a reasonable period of time and that keeps us in balance, we will support it. We will support it. But we will not support increasing the debt limit by \$750 billion by not only continuing down the plan area that we are

into tonight but actually making it worse as the budget that has been presented to Congress projects to do. That, we will not do.

I yield to the other gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS), one of our newer Blue Dogs, to discuss this issue that we bring before you tonight.

Mr. ROSS. I thank the gentleman from Texas for yielding.

When I tell people I am a member of the Blue Dog Coalition, they ask me, what is the Blue Dog Coalition all about? I tell them that we are about being fiscal conservatives.

I come from 10 years in the Arkansas State Senate where I helped balance the State budget for 10 years. My wife, Holly, and I own a small business in our hometown of Prescott, Arkansas, a town of 3,400 people. We know what it is like to meet a payroll every Friday. We know what it is like to live within a balanced budget at our small town family business. And I do not think the American people expect anything less of those of us in the United States Congress, those of us that are setting out the vision and the priorities for the future of this great country. That is what the Blue Dogs are all about, being fiscal conservatives.

I can tell you something else that I am about and I think the Blue Dogs are about, and, that is, we are sick and tired of all the partisan bickering that goes on in our Nation's capital. It should not be about what makes the Democratic Party look good or bad or what makes the Republican Party look good or bad. It ought to be about doing the right thing by the people who sent us here to represent them. I believe there are extremists in both parties. The Blue Dogs are trying to bring the extreme sides of both parties to the middle to find some commonsense solutions to the problems that face us here in America.

The administration requests to raise the debt limit by another \$750 billion. Last year, the administration said we would not need to raise the debt limit for at least 7 years. The administration even said that there was a danger in paying down the debt too soon. I have not figured that one out yet. And now the administration in their fiscal year 2003 budget puts us back in deficit spending by \$100 billion, by creating \$100 billion in new debt, and I believe that is wrong. Raising the debt limit, allowing our government to go further into debt, raids the Social Security trust fund. It simply authorizes the government to write another \$750 billion in IOUs to the Social Security trust fund.

There are several problems with that. Most of us have loans at banks or credit unions. When we go to the bank or credit union for a loan, normally they want to know how we are going to pay it back, what terms, how long it is going to take, how much the monthly payments are going to be. But not our government. Our government simply writes another IOU, and sticks it in the

Social Security trust fund with no provision, absolutely no provision, on how that money will ever be paid back. I think that is wrong. That is why the first bill I filed as a Member of Congress was a bill to tell the politicians in Washington to keep their hands off the Social Security trust fund and, yes, to keep their hands off the Medicare trust fund.

Let us talk about the debt, some \$5.7 trillion in debt. A lot of people do not want to talk about it. I think we should. We should not only talk about it, we ought to pay that debt down. Why? Because we are the ones that created it. At least the majority of the people in America elected the politicians that created that debt. I think it is wrong to pass it on to our children and our grandchildren.

\$5.7 trillion this country is in debt tonight. What does that mean for all of us? Some people in this country think we spend too much money on food stamps. That is \$2 billion a month. Some people in this country think we spend too much money on foreign aid. That is \$1 billion a month. We spend \$1 billion every single day in America simply paying interest, not principal, just interest, on the national debt.

How much is \$1 billion? I put that in my calculator, and I get that little E at the end. But I can tell you what really brought it home for me. I was recently touring a brand new state-of-the-art elementary school in Monticello, Arkansas. As the principal and some teachers took me through that school, they mentioned that it cost \$5 million to build. And it hit me. You know, we could build 200 brand new state-of-the-art elementary schools every single day in America simply with the interest we are paying on the national debt. I am not advocating that we do that, although there are some schools that need our help in a very big way; but I think that demonstrates to all of us how much \$1 billion a day in interest really is. Give me a couple of days of it, and I can finish I-49 in Arkansas. Give me a week of it, I can build I-69 across Arkansas. It is time we pay down the debt.

And something else, we must pay back the IOUs to the Social Security trust fund. They already total \$1 trillion. Let me tell you why that is important to all of us. When Social Security was created, we had 30 people paying in for every one earning benefits. Sometime between 2011 and 2016, depending on whose numbers you want to believe, we are going to have more people earning Social Security benefits than we are going to have paying in to the Social Security trust fund. And everyone agrees that by 2038, Social Security is broke. It is broke in 2038 even if the \$1 trillion in IOUs which, I might add, there is no provision on how we are going to pay them back, it is broke in 2038 provided that \$1 trillion in IOUs is paid back, even with them being paid back, not counting the new \$100 billion that the President and this administra-

tion proposes that we take from the Social Security trust fund and go back into the days of deficit spending. Despite all that, if all that some way or the other gets paid back, Social Security is still broke in 2038.

I have got a grandmother. My grandfather died when I was a year old. My grandmother is now 91. But when he died, she first learned how to drive a car. Then she got her GED, she moved to Little Rock, which is about 100 miles from where we live; and she went to nursing school. She came back to our hometown, and she worked tirelessly for about 20 years as a nurse at our local hospital. My grandmother did not have the benefit of a big retirement plan. She has lived from Social Security check to Social Security check. I know what it is like for seniors to try and live from Social Security check to Social Security check. That is why I want to see us not increase the debt limit. That is why I want to see the politicians in Washington stop raiding the Social Security trust fund. That is why we need to not honor this request of raising the debt limit. It is time for fiscal responsibility at our Nation's capital.

Mr. STENHOLM. I thank my friends from Arkansas, both of them, for making some very relevant points. One of the statements that the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) just made was that we need to tone down the partisan rhetoric. That is what we are trying to do tonight. That is why I will join the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. KOLBE) from the other side tomorrow going before the Committee on Ways and Means in which we will be saying to the Committee on Ways and Means, let us sit down and begin to honestly and sincerely talk about what kind of a fix we need to put in for Social Security so that it does not run into financial difficulties in 2030. Let us start reasoning together.

I do not understand, and that is what the Blue Dogs said last year, we ought to have had that discussion last year; but we did not. But it is not too late. It is never too late for reasonable men and women, elected by our constituents in our respective 435 districts. All of us get here the same way. We get elected by a majority of the people in our district. All of us are well-meaning. But every now and then you vote for something that puts in place something that we think tonight we would like to turn around.

□ 2030

When you had a \$5.6 trillion surplus last year, and you squander it in 1 year, and we go back now back into the Social Security trust fund for the next 10 years under the economic game plan we are under, I would hope our friends on the other side would not say, "there you go again."

All we are saying is we think, before we increase the debt ceiling, we ought to make one more attempt to get a true balanced budget, to get out of the

Social Security trust fund and, even in an election year, have a serious debate and discussion about how we would fix Social Security.

I have got a plan that I have joined with the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. KOLBE) on. Others have plans. Anyone that stands on this floor and criticizes the other person's idea without offering one of their own, I do not think too highly of. But I would welcome an honest and serious debate, and I hope at some time in the future we could use some special orders in which we would actually have a discussion about what it is that we are differing on.

Tonight, for example, I would welcome someone from the other side of the aisle that would come over and say, you guys are all wet. Here is what we are doing. I would welcome that. Maybe we can get into that.

Now I would like to yield to the gentleman from Utah (Mr. MATHESON). The gentleman from Utah is making a real mark here in the Congress. One of the things I have appreciated is his understanding of energy, because he kind of comes from that experience. But, also, just as my two colleagues from Arkansas have been real leaders within the Blue Dog Coalition for focusing on fiscal responsibility, so has the gentleman from Utah.

Mr. MATHESON. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Texas, and I appreciate him leading this discussion tonight on an issue that is so important to me. It is important to the Blue Dog Coalition, but it really ought to be important to all of us.

It was about 150 years ago that my great-great grandfather came to the United States from Scotland. I have to say that I believe I personally am true to my Scottish ancestry when it comes to money, especially the people's money. I do not like deficits. I do not like debt.

When I first decided to run for public office, I never had heard of the Blue Dogs. I was a candidate working hard, talking about issues that I thought were important and the notion of being fiscally responsible, the notion of trying to pay down debt. That was really important to me.

As I got involved in being a candidate, suddenly I heard about this group called the Blue Dogs, and the more I heard about them, the more I said, you know, those guys are saying a lot of the same things that seem to make sense to me, and it has been a group that I am real proud to associate with, for a number of reasons.

Number one, they have a reputation for caring very much about being fiscally responsible. Number two, they also have a reputation for just putting the cards on the table.

What I like about this group is that we try to get away from a lot of the rhetoric, and we are real open to discussion. As the gentleman from Texas (Mr. Stenholm) just said, if someone wants to disagree with us, that is great. Let us invite that dialogue. Let

us have a discussion about how we can come together and come up with some good ideas from both parties to be fiscally responsible.

I think the Blue Dog budget that was introduced a year ago was a real responsible plan. It was a good idea, and we nearly won. We nearly did. But we did not quite make it.

Now we find ourselves in a rather extraordinary circumstance compared to 1 year ago. I recognize that there are a lot of changes in what this country faces from a year ago, and we as Blue Dogs understand that we face some new expenditures in our government right now.

We face a war on terrorism that costs money, and it is a serious issue and something that we support. We face issues about homeland security that we were not thinking about a year ago, and those are going to take resources, too. We support that, and we want to take care of those issues and address them in a responsible way.

To the extent that the economy is in a downturn and to the extent we face some of these issues, we understand that there may be times, extraordinary circumstances like that, when the government may have to go into some deficit in the short term, and if we are coming right up against that borrowing limit, it may be responsible to raise that up a little bit to get us through this short-term problem we face here.

But that is not what we are looking at. That is not what the administration is asking us to do. The administration is asking us to raise the debt limit by \$750 billion.

We throw so many numbers around this place, I think we grow numb to the meaning of these numbers. But \$750 billion in more debt? That is just a lot of money and that is a big blank check that we are asking for, that the administration is asking for; and, quite frankly, they are asking for Congress to be given the latitude to run up another \$750 billion of debt with no plan, with no financial plan, with no idea that has been presented about how we are going to right this ship, how we are going to get away from this pattern of just increasing debt over and over and over.

That just does not seem to make sense. From my Southern Utah roots that does not pass the smell test. We ought to be willing to be responsible about this, and before we write a huge blank check, let us take a look at the short-term issues, as I suggested. Let us be willing to acknowledge that we ought to maybe increase the debt limit a little bit, because we have these increased expenses from the war on terrorism, homeland security.

The economy has been slow. We understand that. But, for crying out loud, \$750 billion, that is a lot of money.

I notice what the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) was saying about trying to get people a sense of what \$1 billion means. I really like that example of 200 elementary schools.

There is another part of that example that ought to be amplified, and that is if you spent that money on 200 elementary schools, you would have something to show for it. You would have an important asset, an asset that creates value. It is an investment in our country, it is an investment in our children, which is the best investment we can make. But when we pay that interest payment, we have nothing, we have nothing to show for it, every single day. I thought that was a great analogy to point out, the difference in how you either spend money or invest money.

There are things government should do, and there are some things government should not do, but I think we ought to keep in mind the notion that there is an investment component to what we do.

The gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) mentioned that he is a small businessman. The gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) I know has been a farmer. I am sure both of them in their lives had the experience of at times borrowing money for their business. They have gone to the bank, and they have had to tell a story, a legitimate, credible story about how, if they are going to borrow that money, how they are going to put it in that business and how that business is going to create some recurring income over time to pay that loan off.

It has been my personal experience, too. I used to work in the energy business, built a couple of cogeneration projects that cost \$100 million apiece. I had to go to a bank to find that money to help build that project. I will tell you, they made me jump through a lot of hoops to explain how that project, once it was built, was going to pay for itself over time. And we got that loan, and those projects are making electricity and those loans are getting paid off because we told a story that was credible, and I am glad to say it has worked out that way as well.

The same thing applies to all of us. Everybody has gone out, maybe they borrowed money to buy a car or a house. You cannot just walk in and say, well, I have no idea how I am going to pay you back, but please give me money.

Yet in terms of raising this debt limit, that is what we are talking about. I know there is a lot of uncertainty when you look out in the future. I understand the problems with long-term projections. We all have to live with that uncertainty.

But that does not mean you just ignore the future. That does not mean you do not try to give your best effort to figure out what you are going to do in the future. As time goes on, you retool your plan to fit changes that you did not expect.

But what we have now is this request to raise the debt limit by \$750 billion, and there is no end in sight. There is no sense of how we are going to ultimately change this pattern of deficit spending.

That is why we are here tonight. That is what we are talking about. We are trying to engage people in a dialogue.

I do not claim to have all the answers for how we are going to right this ship. I really do not. I have some ideas. I think I have some good ideas. But I think we have to be committed, collaboratively, as Democrats and Republicans, and with the administration, too, to talk these things through. These are serious issues. These are tough issues. If they were simple, we would have resolved them already. And they got more difficult in the past year. We have new challenges we were not thinking about a year ago.

This is when we are supposed to rise to the occasion. This is why people elect us. They elect us to come here, think these issues through, learn all the facts, talk to as many experts as we can, and work together to come up with viable, common-sense solutions.

That is what the Blue Dogs are all about. That is why I have been so proud, as I said, to be associated with that group. Their reputation speaks for itself. They have been very helpful in terms of guiding this discussion. And that is why we are here tonight, to talk about this issue of raising the debt limit.

I cannot say enough about how important this is. I think about this issue through the eyes of my little boy who is 3 years old. He has gotten no benefit out of this debt we have run up around this country, none at all. But we are going to stick him with having to pay it off.

You know, as I take on this job and as I think about issues, I try to look at all of these issues through the eyes of him, through the eyes of a child, and think about what kind of world he is going to be growing up in. It is just not fair. It is not right. Those kids do not vote. They do not vote, but they are our constituents, and they are our future. Those are the people we are supposed to be representing.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Utah for those very pointed remarks. What we are talking about tonight is aimed at his child, at my two grandsons, and that is all we are asking that we take a look at.

I have been in this body now for going on 24 years. I have worked with five presidents, and it matters not whether there is an R or D after the president's name. It matters not whether that is an R or D after any of my colleagues' name. If they have a good idea, I will join in attempting to pass it, or at least attempting to discuss it.

Tomorrow I will join with our colleague, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. KOLBE), in which we will ask the Committee on Ways and Means to tone down the rhetoric regarding Social Security. I will be equally hard on my party, those who choose to get a little bit rambunctious with the rhetoric on

Social Security, as I will be equally hard on the majority side. I am very critical of the majority for not taking up a Social Security reform plan. I think that is legitimate.

I used to get blamed for a lot of things that happened when we were in the majority on the Democratic side, but now it seems I still get blamed for what is going on, even though I am in the minority.

Everyone tonight has stated the absolute importance of dealing with the future of Social Security, and we are pointing out our belief that you do not deal with the future of Social Security by digging the hole deeper. When you have an unfunded liability in the Social Security system tonight of \$22 trillion, we do not believe it is a solution to dig the hole to \$23 trillion.

You do not really back up and get a running start out of a hole. When you find yourself in a hole, the first rule is to quit digging. That was the infamous words of Garfield. That is what we are saying tonight. You do not just automatically borrow additional money unless you have got a plan.

Our colleague talked about going and borrowing \$100 million to finance a cogeneration plant. It was a good investment or he would not have gotten the money.

Tonight we are being asked to borrow additional money so we can pay interest on that debt without doing anything to solve the problems of this Nation. That is what bugs us. A lot of people say, well, you know, are you all not being just a little inconsistent? Some might say, how is the debt limit vote different this year from the last time?

Well, let me point out how it is different. We are being asked to raise the debt limit outside of a plan for balance. The last two votes that this body had to raise the debt limit came at a time when Congress and the President were engaged in bipartisan negotiations on a balanced budget plan that ultimately led to the Balanced Budget Agreement of 1997. The current situation is very different. The President has submitted a budget which projects deficits financed by borrowing the Social Security surplus for the next decade. I repeat, the plan that we have been asked to put into place borrows the Social Security trust fund for the next 10 years. That is not a plan we can support.

□ 2045

Now, also we are going to hear, I hope we do not, but I have already heard rumblings of this, that we need to change the manner in which we determine what the numbers are. The last time this bill came up in 1997, we had a different President in the White House. The minority leader of this body said, and I quote, "We said from the beginning of this Congress that we want to negotiate with the President, but we cannot negotiate with a President that does not want to balance the budget. We do not want to negotiate

over whether to balance the budget or not. We want him to submit a budget that balances by CBO."

Now, here we are in danger of again doing, as we have seen happen a few times over the years, we will either use OMB, that is the Office of Management and Budget, that is the administration's budget arm, or we will use the Congressional Budget Office, that is CBO, that is the bipartisan congressional budget arm. We agreed several years ago that we would use CBO; we, the Congress, agreed that CBO would be the arbiter of what the numbers are. Not saying that they are automatically right; not saying that they are any better than OMB, but since we often have different assumptions, we just agreed that we would use CBO.

Now, I hope that the majority this year will stick to what we have agreed to doing. We will use CBO, whatever they say because, remember, these are projections. Let us not slip into using OMB when it works to the advantage or CBO when it works to the advantage; let us use CBO.

Congress and the President need to sit down, roll up our sleeves and have an honest discussion about what we need to do to put the budget back in order with everything on the table. We need to put together an honest plan, putting the budget on a reasonable glidepath toward balance without using Social Security using CBO estimates. That is what we are trying to say tonight.

In 1995, in 1995, 48 Democrats joined with the Republican majority to insist that President Clinton submit a plan that was balanced under CBO numbers. We hope that the 148 Republicans who voted for that legislation, who are still in the House, will stay consistent. Those 48 of us on our side of the aisle do intend to stay consistent. We believe that since we, over the last 8 years, got our Nation's fiscal house in order, eliminated the deficits as far as the eye could see, actually got ourselves into surplus for 1 year, that all of the pain and anguish that has been caused or was caused or was utilized in order to accomplish that goal for our country should not be squandered in 12 months.

Now, is that an overly partisan statement to make? I would hope not. I listen very carefully to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. They say, and I believe it sincerely, as we do, that that is what they want to do. But we cannot do it on this side of the aisle unless they do it. We are in the minority. When we are in the minority, we do not have 218 votes.

Now, I want to repeat, we are not playing politics with this issue. We are not. We will vote for a short-term debt ceiling, provided there is a plan of how to get from where we are to where we need to be. We do not think that is too much to ask of the majority. We are willing to put our money where our mouth is. We are willing to vote on a temporary increase on the debt limit

to meet the expenses of the war. We are willing to do that. What we are not willing to do is give a \$750 billion blank check to continue on an economic game plan that has already squandered \$5 trillion of projected surpluses in one year. We do not think that is unreasonable. But we did not think our budget last year was unreasonable either. We put forth our best effort on the floor, and we lost. And when we lose, we go on to the next battle. Well, the next battle is now. The next battle is now.

Now, again, in case someone is just now joining us, on the debt limit, I used one example, and I will use another. On the debt limit, it is kind of like going into one of our best restaurants in Texas and enjoying one of our infamous Texas beef steaks, enjoying it, and then walking out and saying we are not going to pay for it. That is what the debt ceiling is all about. The other example is a businessman in trouble because of unforeseen difficulties, but has a good record. We have a lot of farmers in that condition right now out in the country that, through no fault of their own, they are finding it difficult to pay back their banker. To go back to the banker, the banker knows them, and they make adjustments. They make adjustments in their economic game plan. They make adjustments in their budgets. We cut back here; we do things a little differently. We tighten our belt. Well, that is what we are asking. We just do not believe it makes common sense to arbitrarily say to our country, we are going to borrow \$750 billion on a game plan that has squandered \$5 trillion of surpluses.

Now, I think it was very important that the gentleman from Utah (Mr. MATHESON) a moment ago acknowledged the war. I have said three times tonight, we are perfectly willing, and we are 110 percent behind our President, regarding the conduct of the war. Separate that issue from what we are talking about tonight. We will do what is necessary to make sure that our young men and women have the tools necessary, both now and in the future, to do what they are called on to do, and that is defend the freedom of this country. We will do that. That is not what we are talking about tonight. I hope that as we get closer and closer to that vote on the debt ceiling, that we will make a few changes in that economic game plan. We will be proposing how we would do it. We have already proposed how we would do it. We told our colleagues last year how we could do it, but we lost.

I want to conclude my remarks tonight by going back again to the Social Security question. I want to make it very, very clear. This is one Member on this side of the aisle that has happened to agree with the President regarding his proposal for individual accounts. I have joined with the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. KOLBE) on that for the last 6 years. We have introduced, reintroduced and reintroduced for the

third time our suggestion of how we can, in fact, make Social Security as sound or even sounder for our children and grandchildren. I am perfectly willing to discuss and debate that issue until the cows come home, and if we could get a majority, we win; if not, somebody will beat us with a better idea.

What I am deeply concerned about is on my side of the aisle critics talking about Social Security without offering their own plan. We will find no one anywhere in the United States tonight that says that Social Security will be there for our grandchildren without making some changes. No one. No one on it today should be concerned for one second about their Social Security check. But for my grandsons, 6½ and 4½ years old, we had better start getting concerned about their Social Security if Congress continues to not do what we need to do in coming up with a plan to reform it.

That is why even if, even if 9-11-01 had not occurred, we still would be standing here tonight saying the economic game plan that we are under, we ought to change. I repeat: even if 9-11-01 had not occurred, we would still be having the discussion that we are having tonight, based on the estimates of CBO and OMB. That is something that people need to understand.

Again, I want to make it very, very clear. The Blue Dogs have taken this hour tonight to say that we are willing to support a temporary increase to meet our expenses, but only a temporary increase. I think we need to keep this Congress's feet to the fire, and we need to make the tough decisions, hopefully starting with at least beginning a dialogue on Social Security this year, without elevating the rhetoric and attempting to win elections this November based on someone pointing a finger at the other side and suggesting that one side is going to bankrupt the system and the other side has all the answers without ever saying what their answer would be.

I will join with the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. KOLBE) and others, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) on the other side of the aisle, for example, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD) on my side, and the gentleman from Missouri (Ms. MCCARTHY), and others who have been a part of coming up with a constructive solution; we will join. I just do not think it is too much to ask of the majority to spend a little bit of time in serious legislation on the most serious problem facing us, other than the war, and that is the future of Social Security. We are going to have a lot more to say about it in the days and weeks ahead, and I thank my colleagues for their indulgence tonight.

#### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

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

#### TO FACILITATE POSITIVE ADJUSTMENT TO COMPETITION FROM IMPORTS OF CERTAIN STEEL PRODUCTS—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CRENSHAW) laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, without objection, referred to the Committee on Ways and Means and ordered to be printed:

*To the Congress of the United States:*

In accordance with section 203(b) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended (the "Act"), I hereby transmit documents to the Congress that describe the safeguard action that I have proclaimed on imports of certain steel products, pursuant to the authority vested in me by section 203(a)(1) of the Act and as President of the United States, and the reasons for taking that action.

GEORGE W. BUSH.  
THE WHITE HOUSE, March 5, 2002.

#### CORRECTION TO THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD OF MONDAY, MARCH 4, 2002 AT PAGE H-653, ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

#### SENATE ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

The SPEAKER announced his signature to enrolled bills of the Senate of the following titles:

S. 1206. An act to reauthorize the Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965, and for other purposes.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. BECERRA (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today on account of business in the district.

Ms. LEE (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today on account of business in the district.

Ms. SOLIS (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today on account of business in the district.

Ms. WATERS (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today on account of business in the district.

#### SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. PALLONE) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. GEPHARDT, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. LIPINSKI, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GREEN of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. CARSON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, today.