

Whether we like it or not, we are going to have to spend some time on the cloning issue. It has been promised that cloning and research—not an easy issue—would be before us.

Then there is educational funding. We talk about education all the time. We have not even gotten to that. That is one issue that is going to be out there.

Certainly, we have the issue of reinsurance for terrorism, an issue we keep talking about, but it is still not here. This is very difficult.

Nuclear storage is an issue I am certain we need to handle. Obviously, again there are some problems pertaining to that issue. One can ignore it if they choose, but the fact is we do have nuclear waste stored around the country in a very unsafe way and we need to find a place to put that, particularly if nuclear energy is going to be part of our future. I hope it is. If one likes clean air, then nuclear generation is one of the ways to do that.

We spent 6 weeks debating energy. Now we have not even moved into our conference committee.

Frankly, I am a little disappointed about the fact that we have all of these things out there, and we recognize these are issues with which we must deal.

Appropriations may be one of the most important things we do, not only in terms of funding the Government but in terms of giving great direction to where we want to be. The appropriations process has a good deal to do with whether we want huge government involved in every issue or whether we want to limit government. Appropriations has something to do with that, and they are very important. We are not there by any means.

So we have a great deal to do, and I hope we can find ourselves in a position to move forward to accomplish these things. There are many more issues, I suppose, but these have already been listed as things we are going to do, as has been said, before we adjourn.

We have some real problems to deal with. I hope we can move quickly to address these issues and find some suitable remedies for them.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. I ask unanimous consent to be recognized in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND MEDICARE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I listened carefully to the comments of my colleague from the State of Wyoming and the discussion about the Senate agenda. I could not agree more. There are certain issues the Senate should take up and take up as quickly as possible. We face some serious challenges, not the least of which relate to Social Security and Medicare.

The Social Security trust fund, which many of us made solemn oaths and pledges never to touch, is about to be invaded by both political parties at this point in time because of the deficit we face.

We are in a deficit situation after several years of the good experience of surpluses and reducing our national debt and reducing the debt of the Social Security trust fund because, frankly, we have run into some bad situations and also some bad decisions.

We could not have anticipated the recession would go on this long, but it has. We certainly didn't anticipate September 11, which has been very costly to our Government. Last year the President convinced a majority of the Senate and the House to vote for a tax program which, in fact, has virtually decimated the surplus which had been predicted. The President said at the time we had \$5.2 trillion in surplus so why not give the money back to the people? Cut the taxes. Why does it stay in Washington?

Some of us who lived through the deficits of the Reagan-Bush era said go slow, be careful, because the deficits could return any day. You just can't tell what's around the corner. But the White House insisted we needed tax cuts—primarily for wealthy people. We did that last year. It turns out this year, instead of a projected \$5.2 trillion surplus over the next 10 years we are down to \$1.2 trillion. We lost \$4 trillion in projected surplus in 1 year.

How did we lose it? For those three reasons: the recession, the war against terrorism, and the tax policy. So we find ourselves now trying to put together a budget and not raid the Social Security trust fund. That is why we are tied up in knots. It was a tax program pushed by the President which came too fast, without enough thought. It took away our surplus. It took the money out of our hands to deal with the challenges facing America.

I did not vote for it. I think that is fairly obvious from my comments. But now, as many other Members of the Senate, I am facing the reality we have to try to put the budget together, even with this deficit situation. The President comes to us and says we need additional resources to fight the war against terrorism. He is right. He will get support from Congress for that, both for the Department of Defense and for homeland security.

Of course that money is going to come out of the Social Security trust fund because we are in a deficit situation again. Many of us are concerned, too, because the President has said: Incidentally, I want more tax cuts. The ones last year were not enough. We should take last year's tax cuts and add on to them. If you look at the President's proposal, what it would do is once again threaten the Social Security trust fund.

That does not make sense because we are just facing the possibility—in fact the reality—of the baby boomers show-

ing up for Social Security. Should we not be thinking ahead, making certain Social Security is strong when all of these thousands and millions of Americans who have paid into Social Security their entire lifetime show up and say: I am here. I want to retire. Where is my Social Security check?

No, the President says: Think, instead, of additional tax cuts.

Take a look at those tax cuts, incidentally. If you happen to be making over \$300,000 a year, those tax cuts for you average about \$40,000 a year in the President's new tax cut round, but if you are making, say, \$100,000 a year, it is worth \$200 or \$300 a year. So there is a great disparity in who will benefit from this tax cut.

But we know who will lose. The American families who have been counting on Social Security are not going to have as strong a Social Security trust fund as they should have because of the President's last tax cut and his proposed tax cut. You cannot keep going to the same well again and again at the expense of senior citizens, at the expense of workers today who, dutifully, every paycheck, put their money down for Social Security and now face the real possibility that when they need Social Security, the system will not be as strong as it should be.

Let's reflect for a moment also on Medicare. The Medicare situation is one that is very troubling. I have traveled across my State of Illinois talking to doctors and nurses and hospital administrators. I have talked to people who are on Medicare. They are concerned. They need to be concerned. For reasons I cannot explain, this White House will not take a serious look at the dangerous state of affairs when it comes to Medicare. In fact, the House of Representatives recently proposed not only cutbacks in Medicare reimbursement for doctors but also further cutbacks to pay for a prescription drug program.

Not surprisingly, hospitals have said if you are going to cut more deeply into Medicare, many of us will be forced to close. So in both Social Security and Medicare we have crisis situations looming and the administration refusing to show leadership. In fact, when it comes to Social Security, the administration is moving in the wrong direction, calling for permanent tax cuts which would additionally threaten Social Security in the future.

I will take just a moment on prescription drugs, if I can. As I travel around my State of Illinois, I find a lot of people, senior citizens in particular, cannot afford prescription drugs. It is understandable if you have taken a look at some of the costs of the drugs now being prescribed. The average American has a hard time paying for them. Certainly a person who is retired cannot come up with the resources to make it work, so many people are making hard choices as to whether they fill prescriptions that the doctors recommend or ignore them or take half of

what they are supposed to take. These are tough calls for a lot of senior citizens.

When we take a look at the issue of prescription drugs, it is not just a question of whether a senior under Medicare would have accessibility to these drugs; it is a question of the price of these drugs. Consider this for a minute. The pharmaceutical companies are spending a lot of money—you see it everywhere you turn—advertising their industry and their product. They advertise their industry by saying: We put good research into new drugs and we find cures.

They are right. Thank goodness they do, and we want to encourage that.

Then they go on, of course, to advertise specific drugs.

Take this drug and you will be able to hop through a field of flowers without sneezing.

Take this drug and you will not be depressed.

Take this drug and it will deal with osteoarthritis.

Take this drug and it will deal with pulmonary seizures.

Take this little purple pill and go to our Web site and you'll feel better already.

Take this Viagra—

And so on and so on.

How much are these drug companies spending when it comes to advertising? They are spending two to three times as much as they do on research. They are spending more money on advertising their drugs than on research on finding new drugs.

To put it in comparison, do you remember Claritin, the drug for allergies? Schering-Plough spent more money in 1 year advertising for Claritin than Pepsi-Cola spent advertising Pepsi the same year; or Anheuser-Busch spent advertising Budweiser. Merck did the same thing with Vioxx.

So when the drug costs keep going up and up, it is reasonable for us to ask the question whether these companies are putting too much money into advertising and not putting enough into research; whether the costs are out of control.

I think it is something we have to address. We have to address the accessibility of drugs and their affordability as part of a prescription drug program. We certainly cannot go the route of the House Republicans of raiding Medicare in order to pay for a prescription drug program. That is what they have suggested.

These are challenges we face. They are challenges which we are going to have to live up to, to make certain we keep our contract with seniors and others who are counting on Social Security and Medicare to be there when they need it.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TAX RELIEF AND SPENDING

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, in the remaining minutes over which we have control, I wish to respond to a couple of things my friend from Illinois indicated.

One was his being very critical of tax relief and tax reduction. It seems to me in a time when one of the real issues before us is the economy, what could you be doing better to help the economy than to reduce taxes? I think that is why the President has pushed that. That is why more conservatives have pushed that. But to be critical of that when we are trying to do something with the economy seems to be a little out of context.

It also is difficult to wonder why the folks who are the big spenders here are worried about the deficit. We passed a bill that was almost \$85 billion more than the previous in agriculture. We did not have any concern about that. So we have people over here who think Government ought to be involved in everything and everyone's lives, and dollars ought to be spent for everything in terms of any program you can think of—and then to hear some concern about the deficit?

I point out, as we talk about problems, there are two sides to these issues and you have to take a little look at what it is you want. If you want a better economy, then you probably need to do something about having taxes be too high. If you don't want to spend so much, you probably ought to take a look at some of the spending bills that you are pushing.

There is a conflict here, but to get up on the floor and complain about reducing taxes yet wanting our economy to be stronger, to get up here and talk about a deficit and then be a great supporter of all the big spending bills—there is a certain conflict there and I think we ought to measure a little bit what we want in terms of what we do in the interim.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORZINE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. CLINTON). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Under the previous order, the time until 10:30 a.m. shall be under the control of the majority leader or his designee.

The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. CORZINE. Thank you, Madam President.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND WOMEN

Mr. CORZINE. Madam President, this morning I rise to speak on perhaps the most important long-term domestic issue facing our Nation—the future health and security of our Social Security system. Today, I want to focus on proposals to privatize Social Security and the special threat privatization poses to women in America.

Last December, late on a Friday afternoon, before Christmas, President Bush's Social Security Commission released its recommendations for changes in the Social Security system. The Commission's report did not get much media coverage because of the timing of its release, and I think that was obviously by design, if you read the report.

The recommendations of the Bush Commission are dramatic and damaging, if implemented, for the future of all Social Security beneficiaries but particularly for women. They involve deep cuts in guaranteed Social Security benefits—cuts of 25 percent or so for those currently working and up to 45 percent for future workers. Undoubtedly, these proposals would force millions of Americans to delay their retirement so that they would have the ability to live their senior years with economic security.

Few members of the public actually have even heard of the Bush Commission, and they certainly have not talked or debated the recommendations. And fewer have any idea that the Commission is calling for drastic cuts in guaranteed benefits, the type that I outlined.

Americans need to know about these plans, and they need to consider them and debate them in a serious way, making sure they know the implications of taking these recommendations to fruition.

Unfortunately, so far, the administration says it wants to put off any discussion of these proposals until after the election. That is unfortunate and, frankly, it is wrong. We should be debating this issue openly and publicly before the American people, on the Senate floor and certainly before the voters in this November's elections.

To that end, I intend to continue to raise this subject and its implications for the American people as much as I can to make sure that the American people understand what the Bush Commission is recommending to the American public. This Senator thinks it is too important to be decided among closeted policy wonks and politicians in the dark of the night.

Today, I specifically want to raise those aspects of privatization that are damaging to women. I know this is an issue that is near and dear to the Presiding Officer.

Women have a reason to be especially concerned about privatization proposals because they would be among the biggest losers if Social Security is privatized and benefits are cut.

As Joan Bernstein, president of the organization known as OWL, notes in