

requirements on small businesses that are the driving force for job creation in this country. And we need to reduce the deficit.

Mr. Speaker, Congress is beginning the effort to tackle the budget deficit, which I believe has been primarily caused by out-of-control spending and should be solved by controlling the growth in spending. We could balance the Federal budget within 5 years if we held increases in Federal spending to 2 percent a year. Inside the Beltway I know, to some that is an unthinkable sacrifice, but how many families, how many businesses had to limit their spending by similar amounts during the last few years? What we must not do is pass legislation that would make this economic recovery come to an abrupt halt.

We should not take the easy way out of our budget problem by raising taxes. The tax cuts for families and small businesses created this economic recovery and raising taxes would put the breaks on this economic recovery.

SAFETY FOR AMERICANS FROM NUCLEAR WEAPONS TESTING ACT

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

Mr. MATHESON. Mr. Speaker, today I announce the introduction of legislation called the Safety for Americans From Nuclear Weapons Testing Act. Let me describe the history and the events that have led me to the introduction of this legislation.

Our country began open-air testing of nuclear weapons in 1951. Between 1951 and 1992, over 1,000 weapons tests took place, over 100 above ground and over 800 below ground as well.

Now, what is interesting about this is the government told the citizens of this country that the testing was safe. And I, like a lot of people in Utah, have roots in southern Utah, and my relatives live in southern Utah. They said it was safe too.

□ 1945

I remember my dad telling me how people would wake up and watch the sky light up in the morning from the tests.

People in southern Utah take a back seat to no one when it comes to their patriotism and their support of a strong national defense. What is unfortunate in this story is that the government lied. They lied to the people in southern Utah. They lied to anyone who was down wind of the fallout from the nuclear testing. In fact, the government knew they were putting people at risk. They kept that information quiet. It was not until the early 1980s that documents in the Pentagon were declassified that showed that in fact the government only conducted the testing when the wind blew the fallout in the least populated direction, which happened to be southern Utah.

Now, a lot of people say, Wait a minute. We used to have those above-ground tests, but now they are below ground. This is an underground test right here. This was in 1970. This was an underground test. The dust and debris went 10,000 feet into the atmosphere. So the notion that underground testing is in and of itself safe, I think a picture is worth more than a thousand words.

Now, what happened in Utah is rates of cancer are much higher than elsewhere in southern Utah. Ultimately, the government admitted culpability when Congress passed something called the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act, which provided monetary compensation to individuals who happened to be living in certain counties that received high amounts of fallout from nuclear testing. Yes, the government ultimately did admit its culpability.

Why am I talking about introducing this legislation today? Because Congress in the past year has taken some actions that are taking us down the path to renewal of nuclear testing of the Nevada test site. Since 1992 there has been a moratorium on testing. Congress voted in the last year to remove what is called the Spratt First Amendment which prevented development of new nuclear weapons. Congress also in its appropriations process voted to move ahead in funding of the development of a new generation of nuclear weapons. And development of a new generation of nuclear weapons to me means we are going down the path to additional nuclear testing. That is why I have introduced this bill.

Now, you can say that this bill is important just because of its impact in the West and particularly in Utah, but this is not just a Western issue. This is a national issue.

It turns out when we studied one of the significant isotopes from previous testing, Iodine 131, and showed the concentrations in each county; every county in the lower 48 States had concentrations of Iodine 131. Interestingly enough, if you look at this map, you will notice you have some counties up here in New York and Vermont that had higher concentrations than some counties in southern Utah. This once again from the National Cancer Institute demonstrates that fallout from nuclear testing is a national issue. It should be an issue of national concern.

That is why I have introduced today the Safety for Americans From Nuclear Weapons Testing Act. Let me describe what the act does. First of all, it would require before any testing happens that the Federal Government conduct a full national environmental policy act review to assess health, safety and environmental impacts prior to conducting nuclear weapons testing. It requires congressional authorization prior to the possible resumption of nuclear weapons testing as well. If those steps are completed, it would require 1 week's public notice prior to any test, and it is going to require much more

extensive monitoring for potential releases of radiation beyond the Nevada test site. It would require the Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency to monitor radiation levels. But it is not just going to be the government that will be doing the monitoring because the legislation also provides for a grant program for universities, particularly across all the hot zones demonstrated by where Iodine 131 had gone, so we will have independent third-party monitoring to look for radiation releases as well throughout the country.

The legislation says that if any radiation travels beyond the Nevada test site, then the U.S. must cease further nuclear weapons testing until Congress would vote to reauthorize such testing.

The legislation creates the National Center for the Study of Radiation and Human Health. It would be a regional consortium of universities that will study the health effect of radiation exposure, radiation-linked illnesses, and other related research illness. Finally, the legislation requires the National Cancer Institute to provide human dose estimates for Americans for all radionuclides and all human organs produced by previous weapons tests. And a report would be provided to Congress and the public within 3 years. In fact, only one isotope has been studied by the National Cancer Institute.

It is an important bill for all this country. I encourage my colleagues to join me for providing safety for Americans from nuclear weapons testing.

RESPONSIBLE BUDGET NEEDED

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BONNER). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMPSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, last month the President submitted to us his 2005 budget. This week, later this week, in the Committee on the Budget we are going to have a hearing on and mark-up that budget. Unfortunately, it is a 402-page document with one huge credibility problem. We are in the middle of a war, and yet it includes no war funding. It is a 5-year budget, but almost 80 percent of the cost of the President's new tax plan does not go into effect until after the 5 years after this budget. It finances a \$519 million increase to veterans programs by shifting costs on to the veterans that this budget purports to help. It does that through the health insurance enrollment fees and co-pays on prescription drugs to the very veterans that we are supposed to be helping.

It gives homeland security the largest increase of all the agencies, as it should; but it takes \$800 million away from our local firefighters and our local police officers at the same time it says it is going to help these first responders. These are the first line of defense. These are the first responders,

and we are taking money away from them in order to pay for them to do the job that they are supposed to do.

It discloses that the Medicare prescription drug benefit costs \$135 billion more than we were told it would cost just 2 months ago. This unexpected cost of \$135 billion totals more than the budgets of Commerce, Energy, Homeland Security, HUD, Interior, State, and EPA combined.

It calls for \$1.2 trillion in new tax cuts, \$65 billion in health tax credits, and \$43 billion in other new spending; but it claims that we can cut the deficit in half by 2009. These are all new costs, new expenditures that this budget does not pay for.

It is not credible, Mr. Speaker, to say we have presented an accurate and honest budget when it includes no funding for a war we are in the middle of fighting. It is not credible to say that cutting domestic spending by \$118 billion will pay for a \$1.2 trillion tax cut. It is not credible to say that you are strong on budget enforcement, but only apply the PAYGO rules to mandatory spending programs. It is not credible to say that deficits do not matter when you are spending over \$349 billion a year just on the interest payments on our \$7 trillion national debt.

Democrats keep getting told that we need to be tough on spending and that if we are tough on spending, all the other problems will take care of themselves. Well, that is another example of this great credibility gap. Blue Dog Democrats are tough on spending, as you will hear from a number of us today who are speaking. We voted for budget alternatives that do not exceed the President on spending. We are tough on spending. And as important, we are responsible on revenue. We do not pretend that you can have a tax cut without paying for it. Rather, we work with what we have got: a war that needs to be paid for, a budget that needs to be balanced, and an American public who looks to their leaders for credibility and for truth.

Right now we are faced with a choice. We can continue buying on credit, or we can begin budgeting with credibility. Our constituents want and our constituents deserve a credible budget. It is incredible that this administration has refused to submit one.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Utah?

There was no objection.

MAKING MEDICARE RUN BETTER

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

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I have a good friend that bought a brand-new Mustang, and he loves that car wonderfully; but every once in a while parts of it will break, and he has to fix it. He tries to improve it every once in a while, not with changing its looks or its purpose. But without servicing that automobile, today it would be simply a rusting hulk. Its glory days evaporated. In fact, quite frankly, it would not run.

That car was built the same year Congress established Medicare. And with Medicare as well, if we did no servicing, if we did not slightly fix those few things that are broken, Medicare today would not run. We are not changing its looks or its purpose. Indeed, people today who are satisfied with Medicare as it is may keep the program as it is. In fact, incentives were put in the bill that we passed on Medicare to ensure just that. But we actually did try to improve the program in its prescription drug component to meet the needs of the most vulnerable of our senior citizens.

Let us face it, if you are over 65 today, it is almost impossible to buy a private health care policy dealing simply with prescription drugs. The most vulnerable segment of our seniors whose income is being dangerously compromised by prescription drug needs has grown over the past decade by 600 percent. In fact, every year almost a 60 percent increase of those personal economies are being endangered simply by prescription drug needs.

This Congress serviced the program for that portion that was not working to make it run better, and they did so free of government price controls, free of government mandates, free of government rationing at the same time. Let us face it, in the 1960s our effort in health care was basically reactive. We were paying for hospital costs.

Today, health care is preventative. Efforts use prescription drug to keep people out of hospitals, hopefully decreasing the overall health care spending that we have. Our medical needs will change. Our desires will also change, and we need to change to meet those particular needs in the government programs.

Sometimes you can tell something about an individual by the company he or she keeps. Those who complain the loudest about changes made to Medicare usually are the status, those who like mandates, the one-size-fits-all government-knows-best approach to the world. Those who are the most supportive are those who truly believe

that choice is good and options ennoble the spirit of America.

There are areas of health care today where the price and the cost is actually decreasing, but always in areas where choice is maximum and options are there, and no third party is limiting those options. As part of our health care change in Medicare, we have provided for health savings accounts, allowing for individuals to put pretax dollars into an account that would grow with tax-free interest that would belong with them, would go with them from job to job. Afterwards, when the needs were greatest, there would be an element of money that was there so that truly Americans could finally individualize their needs, make their own priorities without being filtered through a third party, and invite into the American system the opportunity for options that are no longer there in the health care field.

We are not finished with Medicare. It was not the final bill. As our lives change, our life experiences and expectations change; and the government needs to meet to change also, to meet those changing needs. What this bill did is provide an opportunity to fix an area that needed servicing, not to change the program but to simply make that program better.

We move to have more opportunities to have greater flexibility in the system. It is part of a long struggle that will continue on, a struggle to make medical care cheaper in the future, a struggle that will try and make it so that we can work to make modern market-based medicine a reality for all Americans. That is the option that was given to us. We did not change its looks or its purpose. We simply did some servicing to make it run better.

A SERIOUS ECONOMY

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

Mr. BERRY. Mr. Speaker, this is very serious business. If this was not so serious, I think it would be easy for us to make jokes about some of the things that have been said on this floor this evening.

As I listened to the gentleman from Oklahoma describe this wonderful economy, I could not help but wonder where in the world he was coming up with this idea. We have lost over 2 million jobs in this country. We may have created some, but we have lost a lot more. It does not do any good to distort things or make these things up or make it look like something that it is not.

Come to the First Congressional District of Arkansas and tell someone that does not have a job and does not have health care and their unemployment has run out that things are great in America and they are going to get better because we are going to cut taxes on the wealthiest people in this country some more.