

there is virtually no real commitment in there.

I will discuss two items in terms of health care that are not addressed. There is no attempt with this budget to try to deal with the issues of coverage on health care, and there is virtually no effort to try to get a handle on costs of health care. What we have seen over the period of the last 3½ years of the total numbers of individuals who are not covered with health care has been going up, up, up. This is the chart that shows how the numbers have been going up since this administration: 39.8 million, 41 million, and 43 million.

Look at what has happened in the course of a year. Let's take a look at what happens in terms of health care costs. We have the total number of people going up, up, up. This chart shows the premium increase versus the consumer price increase: 10 percent, 12 percent, 13 percent; 2001, 2002 and 2003; a 43-percent cumulative over this administration.

Maybe someone in the Budget Committee can show us where this budget is doing anything about the costs coming out of the pockets of working families in this country. We are not creating jobs, we are not investing in the education of the children, and the issues of health care costs and coverage are out of control. We would think that at least this budget would have addressed those issues and questions. Fortunately, there will be amendments over the next 2 days to address those. I hope our colleagues will support them.

I yield the floor.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, the amendment offered by my friend from North Dakota is playing politics with two very critical issues to our Nation's economic well-being: The skyrocketing deficit and the future of Social Security.

Clearly, there is a lot we need to do to tackle the enormous \$500 billion deficit. There is also a critical need to shore up Social Security.

Let me remind my colleagues that, recently, Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan called for new steps to restrain spending, warning that unless we take action, our lack of fiscal discipline could lead to increased long-term interest rates. He also recently expressed serious concerns about the need to address Social Security, given the impending retirement of 77 million Americans 7 years from now. Unfortunately, this amendment is not a solution.

We need to start making some tough choices around here and in a manner that puts the good of the Nation ahead of partisan politics. I support PAYGO budget enforcement mechanisms, but not when they are tied to a political agenda. I regret that I must vote against the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

COMMENDING THE BRAVERY OF THE INITIAL RESPONDERS IN THE BALTIMORE HARBOR WATER TAXI ACCIDENT OF MARCH 6, 2004

Ms. MIKULSKI. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. 312, submitted earlier today by myself and Senator SARBANES, expressing condolences to the people who died in the Baltimore water taxi and our appreciation for the brave rescue efforts.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 312) commending the bravery of the initial responders in the Baltimore Harbor water taxi accident of March 6, 2004.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I ask unanimous consent also that the resolution and preamble be agreed to en bloc, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating thereto appear in the RECORD as if read without any intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 312) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 312

Whereas on Saturday, March 6, 2004, a water taxi overturned in Baltimore Harbor during a sudden and vicious storm;

Whereas 25 passengers were thrown into the Harbor, into frigid 43 degree water, with little chance of survival;

Whereas tragically, 1 person died and 3 people are presumed to be dead;

Whereas if not for the immediate action of the initial responders, more lives would certainly have been lost;

Whereas the initial responders demonstrated extraordinary bravery in their heroic response in rescuing the passengers;

Whereas after noticing the accident, the initial responders rushed to the scene, piloting their vessel to the accident site and immediately diving into the frigid waters in their street clothes and boots to help those clinging for their lives;

Whereas the initial responders not only saved those clinging to the boat for survival but used their exceptional skills and ingenuity to elevate the capsized boat to rescue those passengers trapped beneath;

Whereas the team of initial responders worked together to pull the passengers out of the water, identify those who needed immediate medical attention, turn the Fort McHenry Drill Hall into a triage center to identify the victims who were most in need, and provide all with dry clothing and warm blankets;

Whereas it was a team effort to rescue and save those stranded in the freezing Chesapeake waters that involved rescuers in the water, on the pier, and at Fort McHenry;

Whereas we commend the courage and resolution of Maryland's outstanding initial responders whose quick reaction to this terrible accident saved lives; and

Whereas we praise these initial responders—the Navy Reservists, Coast Guard, Mari-

time Fire Department, Baltimore Fire Department, Bowleys Quarters Search and Rescue Team, and the emergency medical team—who worked together as a team to rescue people and save lives: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) pays tribute to the victims of this terrible accident and expresses its condolences to their families;

(2) commends the initial responders in the Baltimore water taxi accident of March 6, 2004, for their bravery, quick thinking, courage, and ingenuity in rescuing the passengers of the water taxi that capsized after a sudden and vicious storm swept over the Baltimore Harbor; and

(3) commends the team of initial responders for this extraordinary demonstration of their ongoing commitment and dedication to saving lives.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I believe we have agreed to the parliamentary aspects of this effort.

I rise to pay tribute to those lost in the Baltimore Harbor water taxi accident, and to express great gratitude to the brave rescuers who saved many of the lives, and, of course, to express condolences to the families.

Let me tell the Senate about what happened, very briefly.

On Saturday, a beautiful, mild afternoon in Baltimore's Harbor became a nightmare. A sudden storm arose. A beloved water taxi capsized in the Baltimore Harbor. Twenty-five people were thrown into the water. They fought for their lives in freezing cold water.

They were families, tourists, Maryland residents, people from across the country, even members of a National Guard unit visiting us.

Two women tragically lost their lives, including a beloved pediatric nurse. One young girl is still fighting for here live.

Three people still remain missing; a couple about to be engaged and a 6-year-old boy on a trip with his father and mother and two other siblings.

I express my heartfelt condolences to those families who are suffering the loss of a loved one. The victims and their families are in our thoughts and our prayers.

But I also want to bring to the Senate's attention what happened with our very brave initial responders.

This accident happened off of Fort McHenry. Stationed there is a Naval Reserve unit. They happened to be on duty as part of their weekend training. At the same time, located there is the Baltimore City Fire Department Maritime Unit.

The minute this boat went over, as this storm hit, a Naval Reserve master chief petty officer saw the boat capsize and sounded the alarm to the Navy Reserve unit. Without hesitation, 20 men got on a boat that was a relic from World War II, that was used as a landing craft, and with great skill they began to proceed out to this capsized boat, exactly as the Baltimore City Maritime Fire Department saw it. And then without even putting wet suits on because there was not time—the water was 44 degrees—the firefighters jumped

overboard. The Navy came in as a rescue mission, maneuvering this landing craft, and coming up close. As they lowered its bowel ramp, they used it as a sidewalk into the water. The Navy men walked into that water, forming a human chain, grabbing people, and pulling them out. And then they skillfully negotiated right up to the capsize boat and used the ramp as a crane to lift it up, and out came three people who had been trapped underneath.

Once again, the Navy rescued two and the fire department rescued one. Now two people are dead. Three are missing. Indeed, it is a very melancholy situation, but if the Navy had not responded the way they did, and if the fire department had not been there, the tragic consequences would have been far more significant.

That kind of bravery, jumping into the water, risking hypothermia is something we need to recognize. These initial responders did it quickly, without thinking and without hesitation and without stopping. Their quick thinking and all of their training and all of their ingenuity and all of their bravery and all of their gallantry helped save 20 lives.

Our terrific Baltimore emergency workers back on shore began to take the people to the hospital. On shore, the Navy took their drill room and turned it into a triage center. I am telling you, they provided emergency medical care. They were taking blankets and clothing and even their own shirts and socks and giving it to those who came from the freezing cold water. We could have faced a greater loss had it not been for them.

When I went to visit with them yesterday, I said: I want to go to the Senate to tell your story. As I gathered their names, they said: We don't want to be singled out. We're Navy. We're the fire department.

They wanted to be known for the team they belong to. They told me they were part of a team, that they needed each other, and that they counted on each other, and it was the team effort that saved their lives.

They do that every day. The fire department and the Navy train every day to save lives. They were there when we needed them, and they were best at what we needed them for.

Now Baltimore fire rescue workers continue to recover the bodies of the victims. Indeed, it is a chilling job, but we want to be able to bring those bodies back home.

I salute our initial responders. I salute those who are now engaged in the recovery activity. I thank God for the emergency medical team that whisked them to the hospital to take care of their hypothermia, their cardiac arrest.

It was a tragic day in Baltimore, but the heroism of Baltimore shines as a beacon to deal with their sorrow. That is why I offer this resolution today. I ask that the Senate and my colleagues join in expressing our gratitude for

them and our condolences to those families of lost loved ones.

I thank the Chair and thank the Senator from Idaho for his courtesy.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Maryland. In fact, I appreciate the Senator from Maryland coming to the floor today and sharing with us, the Senate, and the country this incredible example of how these first responders can make such an important difference when a tragedy strikes. Those in Maryland are to be commended for this response.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET FOR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2005— Continued

AMENDMENT NO. 2704

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, the amendment that is before the Senate today, and on which I expect we will vote very soon, is an amendment that would change the budget enforcement rules as we proceed forward in considering legislation. This amendment would amend title IV of the budget enforcement provisions of the committee-reported resolution to include a 60-vote point of order against the consideration of any direct spending or tax relief legislation that would increase the on-budget deficit in any fiscal year, in its terms, "until the budget is balanced without Social Security" payroll tax receipts.

The problem this amendment poses, although it sounds very admirable on its face, is that it is based on the faulty premise that either tax relief or spending is raiding the Social Security trust fund.

I will be one of the first to agree we should control spending in this body, such that we do not engage in deficit spending, which makes it more difficult for the Federal Government to pay down its outstanding debt obligations.

In fact, as I said yesterday on the floor, when I ran for Congress, I ran on a principle of a balanced budget, and beginning in about 1994, in this Congress, we were able to exert the kind of fiscal discipline that helped us ultimately, with the assistance of a strong economy, to achieve a balanced budget to start paying for what we were spending in Congress and to be able to pay down significant amounts of the national debt.

I believe that is a very admirable principle. But to argue that either the excess spending or the cuts in taxes are somehow raiding the Social Security trust fund is to create a spin that needs to be clarified.

The first point I believe the public needs to understand is that when proceeds come into the Social Security trust fund, by law, those proceeds are utilized, first, for the purposes of the Social Security benefits that are provided. Then, if there are excesses—and in the past few years there have been excesses; there will be for a number of

years until the Social Security trust fund begins to run deficits—those excesses or surpluses are then invested, by law, in Government bond instruments, in other words, Government debt instruments.

Those Government debt instruments, as other debt instruments which the Government issues, are then sold to the public or to buyers around the world, frankly, and then repurchased at the time when they become due by the Federal Government.

It will be necessary for us, when these bonds come due—for any year we issue them—to pay for them. The more deficit spending we engage in, the more debt we incur, and the heavier the debtload for future generations, it is true.

The net effect of the amendment we are now debating is directed specifically at tax relief. There is tax relief that this Congress and the President of the United States have passed, and the President signed into law in the past few years that will expire because of the procedural mechanisms utilized to get it through the Senate. The various provisions of this tax relief that we were able to accomplish in the last few years expire on different dates, depending on the terms of the legislation we passed.

I believe everyone should be very clear about one important fact. Although there has been a lot of debate in the last few days, and will be for the next few, primarily attacking the President for supporting tax relief and primarily saying that this tax relief was for the wealthy and the rich, the fact is the tax relief was provided across the board to Americans from all income categories who pay taxes. In fact, the highest percentage of the tax relief went to those who were in the lower and middle-income categories.

We can debate the value of the tax relief that is claimed to be for the wealthy. Most of it went to small businesses that apparently are categorized as the wealthy. Most of it was that which is providing the incentive to invest in capital that will generate strength in the economy and create more jobs. But setting that debate aside, those provisions of the tax relief that this Congress and previous Congresses enacted over the past few years under President Bush's leadership that expire this year, those that are in jeopardy of going away this year are not these tax increases that everyone has been referring to in the last few days, these so-called tax cuts for the wealthy. They are instead the tax cuts that directly benefit the middle and lower income classes.

What are they? First, we expanded the 10-percent income tax bracket so that more people are covered at the 10-percent level than the higher levels of taxes. That is the lowest level of tax in the income tax structure. The tax bracket of protection for the lowest level of income-tax payers was expanded. It is that tax relief that will