

clean up the workplace, then the other zones of our country that we would address would be the educational system, for example, and that is a little harder nut to crack. There will be significant resistance in a place like that. But that is a place where a lot of the drug addiction gets started. Then the other place is on welfare, those people that are on public benefits.

By the way, I would only do the random testing in any of those places. I would not make it 100 percent testing of anyone. And the way we set up our law, we allow that random to be on a sliding scale. The employer can decide what that percentage is. And if that employer decides that he wants to test 100 percent of his employees once a quarter, he can do that. If he wants to slide that random number selector down, and it must be random, it cannot be personal, down to one-tenth of 1 percent, then fine. Nobody needs to know what that equation is. But the deterrent is always there.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that we have given a good dialogue to methamphetamines here tonight on the floor of Congress and raised the issue. I hope that we bring this bill to the floor tomorrow. I know that we will do good things for methamphetamines and drug addiction in America.

One of my concerns is we are going to end up with 19 stops to get enough precursor to make an ounce of meth versus the 380 if we have the model that I brought before here. As long as I continue to believe in that, I will continue to bring it to the floor of this Congress. But mainly we have got a broad thrust. We have got a good start, and by next year I hope we do take up drug testing. But this is good work done by the meth caucus led by Mr. SOUDER of Indiana. The hearings that he has had all over this country, the work that he has done deserve a great deal of applause from the parents of America.

THE NATIONAL DEBT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. JINDAL). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to visit with the Members of this body about the national debt. I am one of 37 members of the fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition, 37 Members of Congress from all over these United States who share a common concern, and that is the amount of our national debt and the amount of our national deficit as it continues to rise each day.

As visitors walk the Halls of the House office buildings, they will occasionally spot one of these posters, which clearly marks that it is a Blue Dog member. What we are trying to do with the American people, as members of the Blue Dog Coalition, is point out

that the U.S. national debt today is \$3.053 trillion and some change.

If we were to divide the national debt today by the 292 million people that live in America, including the children born today, everyone in America would have to write a check for \$27,000 to pay off this national debt. This is a tragedy. And it is time we restore some common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government.

There are some within the Republican leadership that are trying to make us think that that is what they are trying to do, and what I mean by that is this week, we are going to be voting on what they call a budget reconciliation package. The Republican leadership is going to talk about how it is \$53.9 billion in reduced spending. That sounds good. What they do not tell us is what programs are going to be cut. They will try to convince us that these cuts are happening to pay for the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. They will try to convince us that these cuts are being made to pay for the war in Iraq. Not so. These cuts are being proposed by the Republican leadership in this Congress to help offset \$70 billion in new tax cuts, new tax cuts that are being proposed in the aftermath of the most costly natural disaster in our Nation's history and, yes, at a time when America is at war, tax cuts that benefit those earning over \$400,000 a year.

How are they going to pay for that? By cutting Federal student loans \$14 billion; by cutting Medicaid, the only health insurance plan for the poor, the disabled, and the elderly, by \$11.9 billion; by reducing child support enforcement, \$5 billion; by cutting our farm families, \$3.7 billion.

Mr. Speaker, it is time we restore some common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government. And we can do it and we can do it in a humane way, and we can do it in a way that reflects our values, which reminds me of Matthew, chapter 25, verse 40: "I tell you the truth. Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me."

Do we really want to cut Medicaid, health insurance for the poor, the disabled, the elderly; student loans for our children; farm programs including school lunch programs and food stamps to pay for tax cuts for those earning over \$400,000 a year? I can tell the Members that does not reflect the kind of values I learned growing up at Midway United Methodist Church just outside of Prescott, Arkansas.

So tonight we want to visit with the Members of this body and talk about why this budget reconciliation bill is bad. We want to address this. And here to do it with me are some of my colleagues in the Blue Dog Coalition. Not only will people find us tonight being critical of cutting programs for the most vulnerable people in America, but they will also find us offering up a solution, an alternative, what we refer to as our 12-point budget plan. And I am

pleased to have a number of Blue Dogs join me tonight, including the co-chairman of the Blue Dog Coalition, DENNIS CARDOZA; STEPHANIE HERSETH of South Dakota; DAVID SCOTT of Georgia; and BEN CHANDLER of Kentucky.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. CHANDLER).

Mr. CHANDLER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. ROSS for yielding to me. I appreciate my fellow Blue Dog from Arkansas putting this very important time together for us to talk to the country about what we all believe is a very important matter.

Mr. ROSS's grandparents, I am sure, just the same as my grandparents, grew up in the Great Depression. And I am sure that they had experiences very similar to mine, and those experiences instilled in them a great sense of fiscal responsibility. My grandfather, in fact, always used to tell me, and I cannot even count the times that he told me, "If you spent more than you took in, you would go broke." Wise words. Too bad that the leadership of the Republican-controlled Congress seems to have forgotten this most basic rule of fiscal management. By all accounts, the mentality of our grandparents and their generation has been lost.

As the gentleman said, later this week, maybe as early as tomorrow, the House will consider the first of two bills the Republican leadership will bring to the floor under the auspices of reducing the deficit. The only problem is that this so-called deficit reduction package actually adds billions to the deficit, hastening a fiscal crisis brought on by the systematic mismanagement of our country's finances.

Our deficit has now passed \$8 trillion, and we see right there on that sign that the gentleman has got next to him, that poster, the number 8 trillion. I am surprised we can even breathe a number that big, all those zeros. I did not even know what 8 trillion was until I came up to Congress and I saw that number. And I am sure the American people would be astonished if they realized just how much in debt they were now. And, incredibly, something I heard from the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. TANNER), who I think is with us tonight, earlier this week he told me that this administration has now borrowed more money from foreign governments and banks than the previous 42 United States Presidents combined. Even using the projections from the budgets adopted by this Republican-controlled Congress, the deficit will grow by over \$167 billion over the next 5 years. Bottom line, this Republican-controlled Congress has proven itself utterly incapable of responsibly managing the Federal Treasury.

Rather than use what little funds we have to pay down the deficit and help those in need, many of my Republican colleagues seek another round of tax cuts for the wealthiest of Americans that will drive our country even deeper into debt. This budget package that is being offered is nothing more than

smoke and mirrors. It is not about making sacrifices to reduce the deficit. It is about carving out space for ever-larger tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans by cutting programs that help seniors, students, and low-income families. The very principles that our men and women are fighting for in Iraq and Afghanistan, defending the ideals of our country and helping those in need are on the chopping block this week.

The message from the Republican-controlled Congress is clear: under our leadership the rich get richer, the poor get poorer, and the middle class shrinks all the while.

Low-income families in my home State of Kentucky depend on Medicaid for health care. Thousands of children in Kentucky schools depend on school lunch programs for their only hot meal of the day.

□ 2000

And over 50 percent of college students in Kentucky rely on some type of financial aid to pay for their college expenses. It is simply immoral to turn our backs on those families in need and students striving to get ahead. Not to mention the cuts to child support programs that will hurt families across our country, and the fact that at a time when the USDA must turn away three-fourths of farmers wanting to participate in conservation programs, cutting Federal funds is going to put an even larger strain on our farm families, certainly the farm families in Kentucky who are doing everything they can just to make a living.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to oppose this misguided and immoral budget reconciliation package and instead use this as an opportunity to step back and examine the financial state of our country. Instead of leaning on the poor as a means of cutting taxes for the rich, we need to get serious about addressing the deficit.

Foreign lenders such as China own 40 percent of our total debt. At some point, America must pay back the money it owes. The Republican leaders on the other side of the aisle pride themselves in cutting taxes for the American people. But their irresponsible budget practices now are nothing more than a tax increase later. Continuing to make irresponsible financial decisions now only adds to the burden we are leaving to the coming generations.

This Congress must take immediate action to put our fiscal house in order, and I commend you, Mr. ROSS, and I commend the other Blue Dogs for your steadfast efforts to ensure that the American people understand what is happening to them and the fact that their fiscal house is not in order. You are doing a great service for this country, and I urge my colleagues to join with the Blue Dogs and examine the budget reforms that we have proposed.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Kentucky for his

words this evening. He reminds me, growing up at the Midway Methodist Church just outside of Prescott, I heard many a sermon about being a good steward. When I came to Congress, it did not take me long to reflect back on not only the values I learned growing up, being the son of public school educators, but also I started thinking back to those sermons I heard growing up about being a good steward. I think it is important.

As Members of Congress, I think we have a duty and a responsibility and an obligation to be a good steward of the public's money. I thank the gentleman from Kentucky for joining us this evening.

I mentioned that the Blue Dog Coalition has a 12-point plan for curing our Nation's deficit spending. Throughout the evening, we are going to bring some of them up. Let me point out that number one is to require a balanced budget.

At the Ross household in Prescott, Arkansas, we have to have a balanced budget in our family. The family pharmacy my wife and I own, we have to have a balanced budget. For 10 years I was serving in the State Senate in Arkansas, one of 49 States that requires a balanced budget. Blue Dog Coalition members believe that we, as a Nation, should have a balanced budget, and that is one of our 12 points requiring a balanced budget.

At this time I would like to yield to the co-chair of the Blue Dog Coalition, the gentleman from California (Mr. CARDOZA).

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. ROSS. He is a fabulous Member who has led this effort in the House for a number of years, and I am very pleased he is leading this discussion here tonight. I am pleased he brought down a copy of our debt clock that sits in front of our offices. It truly outlines the fiscal irresponsibility that the current administration is engaged in.

I would also like to highlight one of the points Mr. ROSS mentioned and ask a question. I know that in Arkansas you all are pretty proud of your university there and the Razorbacks. And if you are anything like the folks where I am from, we are building a brand new university, and we have the first class going through right now. And so you know how important it is for young people, especially first-generation Americans who need a start in life, trying to get themselves established to do better for themselves and their families.

I am the first member to go to college, and I can say without a doubt that I would not be standing here in the halls of Congress today had I not gotten the great education that I got at both the CSU schools I went to in California and the University of Maryland just down the street.

This past week when I was flying out here from San Francisco, I happened on the president of the University of Maryland, Dan Mote. He was on my

plane. He came up to me on the plane, and he said, Mr. CARDOZA, I know you are a supporter of education, but what you are folks doing to higher education, and these cuts to student aid? He said, This is going to devastate the young people that attend my college and the people that are going to attend the college in your hometown.

I said, President Mote, you are absolutely right. I cannot think of one Democrat who is going to vote in support of these cuts to student aid.

In fact, I told him a story about the legislature in California. When I served in the legislature, we actually lowered student fees, with the help of the Republican leadership there, because they felt that was one of the most important middle and upper income tax cuts that they could possibly do because most of the folks that were not on financial aid already due to need were their constituents.

Yet here in Congress, we see what they are proposing, and I believe it is a \$1.4 billion student fee increase or the cuts in the student loans. Does the gentleman have that number?

Mr. ROSS. Out of these \$50 billion in cuts, and Mr. CHANDLER from Kentucky hit the nail on the head when he pointed out that they are talking about cutting spending \$50 billion, but they are really increasing spending. That is true because they are proposing \$70 billion in tax cuts, \$50 billion in cuts in spending which leaves \$20 billion not paid for but which will have to be borrowed from foreign banks and foreign governments to fund this tax cut to those earning over \$400,000 a year.

Out of the \$50 billion in cuts, nearly \$8 billion of the \$14.3 billion in student loan cuts fall directly on students and parents. I am beginning to really understand this because I have a daughter who is 17 and a son who is 13, both getting ready before too long to go off to college.

Like every other parent in America, I spend a lot of time these days thinking I wish I had started saving sooner, and I wish I had saved enough to be able to provide for them the way I want to, and I will find a way to do it. We all do as parents, but at a time when parents are struggling to meet the needs of college tuition, the Republican leadership is proposing \$14.3 billion in cuts to student loans. The CBO, not some Democrat or Republican organization, the Congressional Budget Office, has estimated that under the Republican bill there are nearly \$8 billion in new charges to students and families that will raise the cost of student loans. The cost to the average student borrower will be increased by \$5,800.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, that is incredible. That is an unbelievable number. Really we could call this not the Reconciliation Act but the college student tax act because that is what we are going to be doing, we are going to be increasing the tax on those who can least afford it, those who are trying to

do better and increase their opportunity.

I would like to add that, under Bush, we have seen absolute record deficits. We have seen \$2.5 trillion added to the debt. As the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. TANNER) is fond of saying, we have borrowed more from foreign countries than all previous presidents combined under President Bush. And we are borrowing about 80 or 90 percent, the new borrowing that is taking place, is coming from China and countries that are competing with us in trade, and they are using that leverage to make our dollar less strong against their currency. It is just a shame what has been happening here.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. ROSS for participating in this tonight and being such a great leader within the Blue Dog Coalition.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California for being a part of this this evening.

The 12 points to reform this out-of-control Republican leadership that continues to increase our debt and our deficit, point number 2 that the Blue Dogs are offering up to restore common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government: Do not let Congress buy on credit.

Under President Clinton, we had the first balanced budget in 40 years. It was largely due to the fact that this House at the time had what is called pay-as-you-go rules in effect, which means if you want to increase spending somewhere or pay for a new program, you have to cut spending somewhere else. It makes sense. That is called pay-as-you-go or PAYGO rules. The Republican leadership has ended the PAYGO rule in this Chamber. Point number 2 of the Blue Dog Coalition: Do not let Congress buy on credit. Restore the pay-as-you-go budgeting concept to the rules of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, it gives me real pleasure to introduce a leader in this Congress and a real leader in the Blue Dog Coalition, an outstanding Member, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I feel very privileged and honored to be here with my fellow Blue Dogs.

Our debate is going out across the country thanks to C-SPAN, and I think it is very important that we understand that the American people have awakened. All of the polls show it. The American people are glued in to what is happening here in Washington, and right they should be.

I want to start off by saying that so that individuals who are tuning in who would like to know just what are the Blue Dogs, more than anything else, we pride ourselves on being, first and foremost, good stewards of the taxpayers' dollars. We provide the sterling leadership in the Democratic Party for responsible fiscal responsibility.

For 5 years, we in the Blue Dog Coalition have been begging and pleading

that this Congress develop a plan to pay as you go. Mr. Speaker, 5 years ago when the Clinton administration left office, we had a surplus. Billions and billions and billions of dollars were left in surplus. Now 5 years later, under the Bush administration, we are trillions and trillions and trillions of dollars in debt. Make no mistake about it, our debt and our deficit is the number one problem and issue facing the survival and the future of our democracy. And we are concerned about this national debt.

But at a time when we are expressly concerned about it and pushing forward for responsible measures on the Democratic side, it is the height of hypocrisy, it is the height of being insensitive, it is the height of indeed smoke and mirrors for this Republican-led Congress and this Republican President to, under the guise of giving a tax cut for billionaires and millionaires across this country, say he wants to cut spending.

□ 2015

Cut spending of the most vital services, the most important needs in this country, as a matter of fact, in the history of this country, in this 20th century. We have just been hit with the worst hurricane season in modern times. Katrina was the worst that anybody can remember. Billions and billions and billions of dollars worth of damage, an entire city, entire region almost totally destroyed. Over 250,000 American citizens without homes. We all remember those pictures, down in New Orleans, in the flood. Our hearts went out to those people. Well, our hearts must continue to go out to those people.

And the reason it is the height of hypocrisy is here is the President of the United States and this Republican controlled Congress, who says that they want to offset a \$70 billion tax cut for the wealthiest people in this country on the backs of those poor victims of this hurricane.

On the front page of the Washington Post this morning, the answer from FEMA is to throw 150,000 American citizens who have become homeless on the street. The answer from The White House and the answer from this Congress has been to cut the very programs that will help these victims the most. The most effective programs that have helped them has been the food stamp program. And under this budget, this Republican held Congress, and this President proposes to cut food stamps by \$850 million. Not only at a time when we have people who are homeless, without jobs, without hope, but according to the Agriculture Department, just this year alone, we have added 2 million more citizens to the hunger roles. The Republicans answer, cut the very program that has been designed to help them by \$850 billion.

Medicaid. Under this budget planned by the Republicans and President Bush, they want to cut Medicaid by \$12

billion, when 45 million Americans, mostly senior elderly citizens, are going without any kind of health insurance.

And our farmers? Cut them by \$2 billion. Farmers who have been devastated by the flood, who have been hurt by the flood. Now is not the time to cut the farmers.

And our veterans, \$3 billion. Lord knows. We have not been doing right by our veterans. We have cut them. We have cut them. And the President's answer is, cut the veterans. This Republican Congress's is to cut the veterans. Is that not a reason why they have had difficulty in getting the votes? Why they have had to pull the bill last week?

And the American people need to wake up and understand and put the calls in to your Republican congressman to let them know that America does not want to cut the basic services for the needy while trying to add a \$70 billion tax cut for the millionaires and the billionaires. They do not need the money. But the children do.

This budget will cut children's nutrition by \$2 billion and \$5 billion in child support. Heating oil is cut at a time when the oil companies are getting record profits, and their executives are sitting fast.

Student loans, \$14 billion at a time when going to college costs so much. There will be tens of thousands of American children who will not go to college if this Republican budget reconciliation bill passes. That is why this is so important. That is why it is important.

Listen to me, America. And if you know other people, tell them to tune in. We are here to tell you the facts. This Blue Dog coalition is one of the most influential groups on Capitol Hill, and the reason why is because people trust us. We have earned that. We have earned that distinction. Folks like Charlie Stenholm, JOHN TANNER, they have pioneered and set the curve. Respect across party lines. Respect across this country, the Blue Dog coalition. We are speaking the truth tonight.

William Shakespeare said it well when he wrote that great play, Julius Caesar, when he said, et tu Brutus? Yours is the meanest cut of all. And that is what these Republicans are doing in this bill. It is mean. It is cold, and it is wrong. And the American people deserve better. And we are going to give them better.

So Mr. ROSS and my fellow Blue Dogs, we are here tonight to speak the truth. We are here tonight to let the American people know, and we hope and we pray that we will be successful in stopping this budget reconciliation bill from being devastating to the American people.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia for his insight and wisdom that he has shared with us this evening on this issue, this so-called Republican budget reconciliation bill that they say will be brought

up for a vote either some time late Friday night or perhaps early Saturday morning. We know all about that, you know, on the Medicare drug bill, for example, they waited until 3 a.m. They wanted to make sure seniors were fast asleep. And then they held a 15-minute vote open for 3 hours, until they finally got those final two votes they needed to pass it.

I challenge the Republican leadership to give us a vote on this in the middle of the day on Friday, when the sun is still up, and let the American people see how democracy should work in this country.

I talked about the Blue Dog Coalition having 12 points for budget reform to really get a handle on this debt, to stop deficit spending and to restore common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government. Number one was, require a balanced budget.

Number two was, do not let Congress buy on credit. Restore PAYGO, pay-as-you-go rules, to the floor of the United States House, meaning, if you want to spend money on one program, you have got to cut spending on another program.

Number three is, put a lid on spending. Ever since I was a small child growing up, I have heard it was the Democrats that spent the money. And yet, you know it is a Democratic President, President Clinton, that gave us the first balanced budget in this country in 40 years, from 1998 through 2001. Then what happened? For the first time in 50 years, the Republicans now control the White House, the House and the Senate, and from 2001 to 2003, total government spending soared by 16 percent. The Blue Dogs propose putting a lid on spending. The Blue Dogs propose holding the line on discretionary spending for the next three fiscal years at 2.1 percent. That is point number three to our 12 point plan for budget reform.

With us this evening from the State of Tennessee is one of the founders of the Blue Dog Coalition, former cochair of the organization and a real leader, a founding father for the Blue Dog Coalition, JOHN TANNER from Tennessee. And just to expand on what Mr. SCOTT from Georgia said, I mean, look, like so many people in this country, many of us in the Blue Dog Coalition, we are sick and tired of all the partisan bickering that goes on in our Nation's Capitol. We are not standing here tonight to beat up the Republicans. We are here tonight to try and hold them accountable for this spending and offer up a solution on how we can restore common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government. Like so many people across this country, I am sick and tired of all the partisan bickering that goes on at our Nation's Capitol. It should not be about whether it is a Democratic idea or a Republican idea. It ought to be about is a common-sense idea and does it make sense for the people that send us here to be their voice and their representative. That is

what the Blue Dog Coalition is all about, as Mr. SCOTT indicated. That is why we have earned the respect of so many across this Nation and here on Capitol Hill.

At this time, I would like to turn this over to one of the founding fathers of the Blue Dog Coalition, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. TANNER).

Mr. TANNER. Mr. Speaker, I think that means I am old. I appreciate the gentleman having this special order tonight and inviting us down here. Mr. SCOTT, many of you may know, but his brother-in-law is the homerun king of baseball, Hank Aaron, and he was nice enough to invite me down to an event where Hank was here. And I appreciate that. I got a picture of me and Hammering Hank Aaron that I cherish very much.

Mr. ROSS. We were glad to have you.

Mr. TANNER. I really enjoyed that. But I want to thank you all for being here tonight. I want to talk about this financial picture of our country maybe in a little different way. And the way I want to talk about it is not as a Democrat or as a Republican, but as an American. We only have one dollar. We only have one balance sheet. We only have one military. We only have one economic opportunity in our lives here. And folks, I have got to tell you, we are in deep, deep trouble. And the financial picture of this country is deteriorating as we speak. I do not know how else to say this. It is not fun to talk about the financial morass that we are in. You know, there are not many politicians that go before the American people and get elected and say, folks we have got a problem. We do not have enough revenue, or we have too much spending. And we have got to do something about it. You do not hear that. You do not hear people saying we have got problems. We have to fix them together. And yet, that is what I think the Blue Dog Coalition is all about. We have done everything we can to reach out to the administration and the Republicans. We have asked the President for a budget summit. We got a letter back saying that would not be the case. We have asked the Republican leadership to consider our 12-point plan, balanced budget amendment to try to get PAYGO back, which is just common sense. If you are going to spend money, you need to pay for it somehow. That has been refused. So we have tried every way we can, and I will tell you, quite frankly, until the President of the United States and the leadership here in Congress, the Republican leadership here in Congress at the moment, levels with the American people about the deterioration of their country's balance sheet, it is going to be awfully difficult, quite frankly, for us here on the floor as blue dogs or any other Member of Congress to convince the American people about how dramatic and how drastically our collective financial deterioration has occurred.

Let me just try to put it very briefly in a context. Since 2001, when we em-

barked on a different economic program, this Nation has gone into debt another \$2.3 trillion; \$1.3 trillion of that has been borrowed from private sources and, you know, what is so bad about this is that 85 percent of this money has come from people who have loaned us this money who do not live in the United States. I did some figuring today. Just based on what President Bush and the Republican Congress has done in the last 4 years, and again, this is not partisan. You go to www.treasury.gov, the U.S. Treasury Web site. What I am telling you is fact. It is not a political argument. I wish it were. But it is not. You go to the treasury Web site. What has happened to us is that, by these deficits, \$157 billion in 2002, we are paying interest at that year at 4.3 percent—2003, \$377; 2004, \$412, the largest in history. Last year, \$319. Anyway, you add all that up, we are now paying \$50-plus billion dollars a year in interest that we were not paying before President Bush changed the economic game plan of our country with this compliant Congress—\$50 billion a year. What I tell people is, quite frankly, what we have done is we have increased taxes on the American people \$500 billion over the next 10 years, and that is on interest.

□ 2030

Interest is a tax that cannot be repealed. Everybody out there knows that when you run that credit card through, you do not have to pay for it today; but you know at the end of the month you are going to get a bill, and the bill is going to have interest on it. And where people get in trouble when the bill runs up so high, all they can pay is interest, and when that happens, that is when they get in trouble.

The United States Treasury announced the other day that for the first quarter of 2006, they are going to have to borrow a record \$171 billion. This is just to finance our government for the first quarter of this fiscal year. On February 9, we need to mark that down on our calendars, for the first time in 5 years, the Treasury will have to offer a 30-year bond. Do you know why they are bringing that back? We did not have it in 2001. We could discontinue it then because we were on the road to some sort of semblance of financial sanity.

February 9, 5 years later, we are going to bring back the 30-year bond. Do we know what that means? It means we are borrowing so much money, we have to long-term it, because we cannot afford it in the short term. That is what the economic plan that we have been following for the last 4 or 5 years is doing to this country.

Now, if you do not think that is bad enough, consider the fact that we now owe 44 percent of our privately held debt to people who do not even live in America. Said another way, we are writing \$185 billion worth of checks every year for interest. We get nothing.

We get no health care, no veterans benefits, no anything. We write checks, and 44 percent of those checks do not even stay in this country.

This has literally happened in about the last 50 months. It did not used to be this way. In fact, when they got here, we had a \$5 trillion surplus. We do not need a surplus, but we need to pay our bills; and we are not doing that.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman raises such a great point on the interest, and I think the American people need to know that just on the money that we are paying these other countries, just on the interest, it amounts to more than what we are paying for our own homeland security.

Mr. TANNER. That is correct. This recklessness has got to be stopped. The Blue Dogs will work with anybody. But until the President and the United States Congress level with the American people and say we do not just have a deficit that is cyclical that the country is experiencing, until they will tell the American people the truth, we have a structural, institutionalized built-in deficit that is going to sink all of us collectively as Americans, not as Democrats or Republicans, as Americans, and rob our kids and really our citizens of any hope of a better way of life.

That is what is at stake here. Until they level with us, we can come down here and do these Special Orders, and I thank Mr. ROSS and Mr. SCOTT and Ms. HERSETH and the others, but I tell my colleagues, this is not a Democrat or Republican problem. This is an American problem; and until they face up to it, we have a terrible situation here in Washington. I commend the gentleman again for having this Special Order.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Tennessee, one of the Founding Fathers of the Blue Dog Coalition, for sharing with us this evening his thoughts on this issue. He is so right: Our Nation, just on this debt, our Nation is spending nearly a half a billion dollars a day. Our Nation is spending nearly a half a billion dollars every 24 hours, simply paying interest on the national debt. Our Nation is spending nearly a half a billion dollars, that is with a B, nearly a half a billion dollars a day simply paying interest on the national debt.

A half a billion dollars, how much is that? We could build 100 brand-new elementary schools every single day in America simply with the interest we are paying on the national debt. I have Interstate 49 and Interstate 69 and Interstate 530 under construction in my congressional district. Give me about a week's worth of interest on the national debt and I could finish all three of them. So projects and priorities in this country will continue to go unmet as long as we have this \$8.53 trillion debt hanging over our heads that is growing every day. That is the debt.

The other part of this the gentleman from Tennessee was talking about is

the deficit. Our Nation is borrowing \$907 million every single day. We are sending \$188 million every day to Iraq and \$33 million every day to Afghanistan. At a time when America is at war, the Republican leaders in this Congress are proposing an additional \$70 billion in tax cuts. Never in the history of this Nation has America cut taxes when it is at war. And not only are we at war, but we are also coming off the most costly natural disaster in our Nation's history; and they are proposing \$50 billion in cuts.

Mr. TANNER talked about how this is an American issue, and he is right. It is also an issue that as a father concerns me. Cutting student loans at a time when so many of us have children getting ready to go off to college; cutting Medicaid, health insurance for the poorest among us so we can pay for tax cuts for those earning over \$400,000 a year, these are not the kinds of values I was taught growing up at the Midway United Methodist Church just outside Prescott, Arkansas.

Mr. TANNER mentioned how we have so much money that is being borrowed to run our government from foreigners. We owe Japan \$714.9 billion; China, \$191.1 billion; the United Kingdom, \$152.5 billion; the Caribbean Banking Center, \$76.2 billion; Korea, \$69.3 billion; OPEC nations, and we wonder by gasoline is so high, OPEC nations, we have borrowed as a Nation \$66.6 billion from them. The list goes on and on. In fact, we have borrowed, this administration has borrowed more money from foreign governments and foreign banks in less than 5 years than the previous 42 Presidents combined. It is time to restore common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government.

Also joining us this evening is a relatively new Member of Congress, a new member to the Blue Dog Coalition in her second term, someone who has really made her mark here in Washington as a fiscal conservative, someone who speaks with a lot of credibility on this issue, and that is the gentleman from South Dakota (Ms. HERSETH).

Ms. HERSETH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arkansas for his kind words and for his extraordinary leadership on this important issue within the Blue Dog Coalition and within the Congress on highlighting the impact of budget decisions over the last 5 years that have created perils, dangerous situations for the country now and into the future.

I would like to just share, if I might, and read from some quotes that have come out, quoting individuals recently within the last week or two, to highlight what Mr. SCOTT, Mr. TANNER, and Mr. ROSS have already noted, that this is not a partisan issue. There are those on both sides of the aisle and those who do not have any affiliation with either political party that are expressing the concerns with the budget reconciliation package offered by the majority.

Let me first quote Robert Bixby, the executive director of the Concord Coa-

lition, from a statement he made just 2 days ago: "This year's budget resolution calls for two reconciliation bills, a spending cut bill of \$35 billion and a tax cut bill of \$70 billion." He is referring here to Senate numbers. "Simple arithmetic dispels the notion that this combination is aimed at deficit reduction. It is hard to rally support for a spending cut labeled the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 when it will be followed by a tax cut that, by the same logic, should be labeled the Deficit Increase Act of 2005."

Or take a quote from our colleague on the other side of the Capitol, Senator George Voinovich, a Republican from Ohio, a statement made just last week: "I do not know how anyone can say with a straight face that when we voted to cut spending last week to help achieve deficit reductions, we can now then turn around 2 weeks later to provide tax cuts that exceed the reduction in spending. That is beyond me, and I am sure the American people."

Or let us take a statement from Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan from 2 weeks ago: "We should not be cutting taxes by borrowing. We do not have the capability of having both productive tax cuts and large expenditure increases, and presume that the deficit doesn't matter."

Or take a quote from the editorial boards across the country, including one from the Des Moines Register: "As a deficit reduction strategy, the House GOP plan is ludicrous. After passing the budget cuts, next on Congress's agenda is passing further tax cuts for the wealthy at a cost to the Treasury of \$70 billion over 5 years. Cutting spending by \$55 billion while cutting taxes by \$70 billion will make the deficits worse, not better."

The New York Times editorial board stated: "An additional \$70 billion worth of upper bracket tax cuts heavily backed by the White House are waiting in the wings and will drive the deficit even deeper across generations of taxpayers. The administration and congressional leaders arranged to separate votes on the two halves of the budget to obscure the full picture."

Finally, from the Atlanta Journal and Constitution from last week: "This proposed belt-tightening by Congress is not being driven by national security, deficit reduction, or hurricane relief. Instead, it has been proposed as a way to finance a \$70 billion tax holiday for the wealthiest Americans. Congress can't tell the public one week that a dooming deficit is forcing it to cut food stamps and Medicaid, then turn around the next week and award the wealthiest Americans a generous tax cut."

Mr. Speaker, that is really the bottom line here tonight, is it not? And what we are trying to share with our colleagues and our constituents is that if you do that, say one thing one week and turn around the next week and do something that obliterates the savings that you claimed that you were trying to achieve, that damages your credibility, it damages the credibility of the

work we do in this Congress. It damages the credibility of the budget process, which is why the Blue Dogs have offered the 12 points to reform the budget process.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with many back home in South Dakota that budget cuts take courage. They do. They take a lot of political courage. Decisions to cut spending, especially from popular programs, certainly are not easy decisions. But I contend that it is cowardly not to be straightforward with the American people about the priorities reflected in the entirety of the reconciliation process.

As my colleagues have noted here earlier this evening, we can question legitimately the priorities within the spending cut bill, the spending side of the ledger in this reconciliation process. Take higher education, over \$14 billion worth of cuts out of the 50 to \$55 billion overall on the spending cut side of the package. This is a double whammy on our younger generation, because not only do they have to pay thousands more to finance their higher education, but they also have to pay the interest tax on our national debt that increases.

Mr. Speaker, our knowledge base has been this country's way of staying ahead of the rest of the world and maintaining our competitiveness in a fast-changing global economy. But yet they take student loan programs that represent 1 percent of the overall Federal budget and make it 30 percent, roughly 30 percent of the spending cuts that they targeted in the spending cut side of the reconciliation equation.

Then take agriculture and rural development. We cut all of these programs out of agriculture and rural development that not only go back on the deal we cut with farmers and ranchers in the farm bill in 2002 which, by the way, has saved billions more than what was projected at the time it was passed; but then we leave rural America behind at a time of skyrocketing fuel costs, cutting value-added marketing programs, cutting programs intended to expand broadband technology in rural America.

Then, take Medicaid. Medicaid, a program designed to help children, pregnant women, people with disabilities, and the elderly. Now claims that the growth of Medicaid spending is out of control cannot be supported when you compare the growth in spending in the private sector. It is about half in Medicaid as to what it is in premiums paid out and the growth of the spending in the private sector for health care insurance.

So when you look at the number of people who are eligible for Medicaid, that really requires a different approach and different solution, like making it easier, not harder, to finance a higher education and making it easier to get a higher-paying job. These cuts also in Medicaid affect long-term care facilities, the residents, the staff,

the communities; and it affects the workforce, health and productivity issues that we face in this country.

□ 2045

I also think we can raise serious questions as well about the priorities within the preferential tax treatment portion of the reconciliation bill, which extends provisions that are now secure until 2008, rather than providing a fix for the alternative minimum tax, which is affecting more and more middle-income taxpayers.

The final point here, we need to seriously question, as we have done tonight, with our colleagues in the next couple of days, with the American people, the overall result of this reconciliation package, which makes the deficit worse, as we have demonstrated, which increases the country's level of borrowing further, as Congressman TANNER pointed out with the statistics of the foreign ownership of our national debt, and the increasing percentages of that. The Treasury is set to borrow \$151 billion in the first quarter of 2006 alone, not to mention that this is simply an interest tax on my generation, the generation following me, and future generations of Americans.

Let me conclude by saying, let us stop the recklessness. I think the American public wants us to stop the recklessness, to reform the budget process as the Blue Dogs have proposed, restore the credibility in managing the Nation's finances by taking action that reduces the deficit and puts us back on track towards balanced budgets.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote no, oppose these reconciliation proposals for both sides of the Federal Government's ledger, for which the bottom line is even more red ink.

Mr. ROSS. I want to thank the gentlewoman from South Dakota (Ms. HERSETH) for her comments this evening, and I can assure you I join you in opposing cuts to student aid programs. I join you in opposing cuts to Medicaid, health insurance for the poor, for the disabled and the elderly. I join you in opposing cuts to child support enforcement, and I join you in opposing \$3.4 billion cuts to agricultural programs, including \$844 million to food stamps, the elimination of school lunches and breakfast benefits for 40,000 children, \$1 billion in cuts to farm commodity programs, and, yes, \$1 billion in cuts to rural development conservation and energy programs.

The gentlewoman from South Dakota is a real leader on the House Agriculture Committee. I want to thank her for standing up and fighting those cuts in that committee.

I promised you we would go over the 12 points to the Blue Dog budget reform. The gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT) is still here with me, and we are going to try to get through these before we run out of time.

Quickly, number four, require agencies, these are our solutions, how we

fix the problem, restore common sense, fiscal discipline to our Nation's government. Require agencies to put their fiscal year houses in order. According to the Government Accounting Office, not some political party group, according to the Government Accounting Office, 16 of 23 major Federal agencies cannot issue a simple audit of their books. Worse, the Federal Government cannot account for \$24.5 billion it spent in 2003. The Blue Dog proposal is simple, put a budget freeze for any Federal agency that cannot properly balance its books.

Number five, make Congress tell taxpayers how much they are spending.

Number six, set aside a rainy day fund.

Number seven, do not hide votes to raise the debt limit. If the gentleman would continue with a list, I think you have number 8 through 12 of the Blue Dog plan for a meaningful budget reform.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Absolutely, our plan, the Blue Dog plan number eight, is to justify spending for pet projects, that while we have many projects that may be worthy, it is very important that we have written justification available to the public so the public can see, and it strengthens our credibility to make sure we are spending the taxpayer's money in an efficient effective manner, justify the spending for pet projects.

Number nine, ensure that Congress reads the bills it is voting on. So many times, we do not even have the time to read the bills we are voting on. How can you vote intelligently on an issue if you are not even given the time? The Blue Dogs will recommend that we at least be given a minimum of 3 days to finally look at the legislation, to make sure that we understand and have all the information for a vote.

Number ten, require honest cost estimates for every bill that Congress votes on, most important. Get the right amount of money that it is going to cost.

Number 11, make sure new bills fit the budget, pay-as-you-go, make sure that we are not putting in more than we have to spend.

Number 12, make sure that Congress does a better job of keeping tabs on government programs. The Blue Dogs propose that each committee be required to submit a report at least twice a year, available again to the public, which is very important that we make known that we want to make sure the public is a working, participating partner in our 12 points.

Mr. Speaker, those are our 12 points. We are very proud of them. I think they make sense. It gives vision. It gives direction. It gives purpose.

I want to just conclude, because I know our time is short, before I hand it back to the gentleman from Arkansas, we are at Thanksgiving. What an extraordinary time. Families all over this country a week from tomorrow will be gathering together. We have got to make sure that we give them a

Thanksgiving that they will appreciate, and I assure you that they will not appreciate cutting Medicaid. They will not appreciate cutting the farmers' programs. The veterans are not going to have a good Thanksgiving if they know that their benefits are cut by \$2 billion. Our students are not going to have a good Thanksgiving if they know that the student loan program is being cut by \$14 billion; our children, child support \$5 billion, child nutrition, food stamps.

We have got to make sure that our people have a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday. The way to do that is if they bring that budget reconciliation bill up before we leave, in the name of the American people, we must vote it down.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, members of the Blue Dog Coalition have come tonight, not only to point out our Nation's debt and deficit, but to offer a solution with our 12-point plan. We look forward to other opportunity in the future to further discuss our 12-point plan for meaningful budget reform.

FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment bills of the House of the following titles:

H.R. 126. An Act to amend Public Law 89-366 to allow for an adjustment in the number of free roaming horses permitted in Cape Lookout National Seashore.

H.R. 539. An Act to designate certain National Forest System land in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico as a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

H.R. 584. An act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to recruit volunteers to assist with, or facilitate, the activities of various agencies and offices of the Department of the Interior.

H.R. 606. An act to authorize appropriations to the Secretary of the Interior to the restoration of the Angel Island Immigration Station in the State of California.

H.R. 1101. An act to revoke a Public Land Order with respect to certain lands erroneously included in the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge, California.

H.R. 1972. An act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study to determine the suitability and feasibility of including in the National Park System certain sites in Williamson County, Tennessee, relating to the Battle of Franklin.

H.R. 1973. An act to make access to safe water and sanitation for developing countries a specific policy objective of the United States foreign assistance programs, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed bills of the following titles in which concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 242. An act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to carry out a study to determine the suitability and feasibility of establishing memorials to the Space Shuttle Columbia on parcels of land in the State of Texas.

S. 592. An act to amend the Irrigation Project Contract Extension Act of 1998 to ex-

tend certain contracts between the Bureau of Reclamation and certain irrigation water contractors in the States of Wyoming and Nebraska.

S. 1170. An act to establish the Fort Stanton-Snowy River Cave National Conservation Area.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 3010, DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

Mr. LEWIS of California (during the Special Order of Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland) submitted the following conference report and statement on the bill (H.R. 3010) making appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes.

CONFERENCE REPORT (H. REPT. 109-300)

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 3010) "making appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes", having met, after full and free conference, have agreed to recommend and do recommend to their respective Houses as follows:

That the House recede from its disagreement to the amendment of the Senate, and agree to the same with an amendment, as follows:

In lieu of the matter stricken and inserted by said amendment, insert:

That the following sums are appropriated, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes, namely:

TITLE I—DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

(INCLUDING RESCISSIONS)

For necessary expenses of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, the Denali Commission Act of 1998, and the Women in Apprenticeship and Non-Traditional Occupations Act of 1992, including the purchase and hire of passenger motor vehicles, the construction, alteration, and repair of buildings and other facilities, and the purchase of real property for training centers as authorized by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998; \$2,652,411,000 plus reimbursements, of which \$1,688,411,000 is available for obligation for the period July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2007; except that amounts determined by the Secretary of Labor to be necessary pursuant to sections 173(a)(4)(A) and 174(c) of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 shall be available from October 1, 2005 until expended; and of which \$950,000,000 is available for obligation for the period April 1, 2006 through June 30, 2007, to carry out chapter 4 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998; and of which \$8,000,000 is available for the period July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2009 for necessary expenses of construction, rehabilitation, and acquisition of Job Corps centers: Provided, That notwithstanding any other provision of law, of the funds provided herein under section 137(c) of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, \$282,800,000 shall be for activities described in section 132(a)(2)(A) of such Act

and \$1,193,264,000 shall be for activities described in section 132(a)(2)(B) of such Act: Provided further, That \$125,000,000 shall be available for Community-Based Job Training Grants, which shall be from funds reserved under section 132(a)(2)(A) of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and shall be used to carry out such grants under section 171(d) of such Act, except that the 10 percent limitation otherwise applicable to the amount of funds that may be used to carry out section 171(d) shall not be applicable to funds used for Community-Based Job Training grants: Provided further, That funds provided to carry out section 132(a)(2)(A) of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 may be used to provide assistance to a State for State-wide or local use in order to address cases where there have been worker dislocations across multiple sectors or across multiple local areas and such workers remain dislocated; coordinate the State workforce development plan with emerging economic development needs; and train such eligible dislocated workers: Provided further, That \$7,936,000 shall be for carrying out section 172 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998: Provided further, That \$982,000 shall be for carrying out Public Law 102-530: Provided further, That, notwithstanding any other provision of law or related regulation, \$80,557,000 shall be for carrying out section 167 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, including \$75,053,000 for formula grants, \$5,000,000 for migrant and seasonal housing (of which not less than 70 percent shall be for permanent housing), and \$504,000 for other discretionary purposes, and that the Department shall take no action limiting the number or proportion of eligible participants receiving related assistance services or discouraging grantees from providing such services: Provided further, That notwithstanding the transfer limitation under section 133(b)(4) of such Act, up to 30 percent of such funds may be transferred by a local board if approved by the Governor: Provided further, That funds provided to carry out section 171(d) of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 may be used for demonstration projects that provide assistance to new entrants in the workforce and incumbent workers: Provided further, That no funds from any other appropriation shall be used to provide meal services at or for Job Corps centers.

For necessary expenses of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, including the purchase and hire of passenger motor vehicles, the construction, alteration, and repair of buildings and other facilities, and the purchase of real property for training centers as authorized by the Act; \$2,463,000,000 plus reimbursements, of which \$2,363,000,000 is available for obligation for the period October 1, 2006 through June 30, 2007, and of which \$100,000,000 is available for the period October 1, 2006 through June 30, 2009, for necessary expenses of construction, rehabilitation, and acquisition of Job Corps centers.

Of the funds provided under this heading in Public Law 108-7 to carry out section 173(a)(4)(A) of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, \$20,000,000 are rescinded.

Of the funds provided under this heading in Public Law 107-117, \$5,000,000 are rescinded.

Of the funds provided under this heading in division F of Public Law 108-447 for Community-Based Job Training Grants, \$125,000,000 is rescinded.

The Secretary of Labor shall take no action to amend, through regulatory or administration action, the definition established in 20 CFR 667.220 for functions and activities under title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, or to modify, through regulatory or administrative action, the procedure for redesignation of local areas as specified in subtitle B of title I of that Act (including applying the standards specified in section 116(a)(3)(B) of that Act, but notwithstanding the time limits specified in section