

I will get a report on that from around the country on all the projects that are going to be delayed because we didn't do our work or that are not going to move forward.

In my State of Ohio, for instance, construction costs and increased inflation forced our Department of Transportation to cancel and postpone nearly \$450 million in highway projects. They didn't know what they were going to get.

Democrats have a right to point fingers at Republicans for failing to complete their work on the outstanding appropriations before December. But let's be clear, Democrats behaved equally poorly when they lost the majority in 2002. At that time, Majority Leader Daschle was unable to pass a budget for 2003. Subsequently, Democrats did not complete their work on appropriations before going home for the winter recess. When we came back in January 2003, we took up the issue of appropriations within 3 days. We passed three continuing resolutions through February 20, at which point the Senate voted on an omnibus bill, much the same as we are doing today.

The fact is, we both have dirty hands. This is not just a Democratic or Republican issue. Both parties have acted irresponsibly. Congress has the power of the purse, but we are not the best steward of the taxpayers' money if time and time again we blindly pass omnibus bills and fund programs without accounting for how those programs are performing.

These are not isolated instances. Let me point out—and the public should know—in 25 of the past 30 years, Congress has failed to enact all the appropriations bills by the start of the fiscal year. In fact, the last time Congress enacted appropriations bills by the September 30 deadline was 1997. And for 17 of the past 30 years, Congress has had to combine two or more appropriations bills together in omnibus and minibus legislation. When are we planning to get it done on time? By failing to do our job, we are starving the executive branch of Government and preventing it from doing its job. This is irresponsible.

One way around this annual appropriations problem is to convert the annual budget cycle into a biennial or 2-year cycle. This would save Congress valuable time eaten up every year debating appropriations matters. We spend most of our time on agency appropriations, on the budget, and no time on oversight. Under biennial budgeting, we would convert the annual budget, appropriations, and authorizing processes into a 2-year cycle. The first year would be reserved for the budget and appropriations process. The second year would be to conduct oversight and pass authorizing legislation. This would leave Congress more time to examine programs to determine which are wasteful, which should receive more funding and which should be terminated altogether. Congress

would have more time to finish its business by the deadline the law imposes.

A 2-year budget proposal is long overdue. We have been talking about this since I came to the Senate in 1999, Senator DOMENICI and I and many others. We ought to reintroduce that bill. In fact, I intend to reintroduce that bill with several of my colleagues to see if we can't go to a 2-year budget cycle.

Operating without a budget impacts our effectiveness in fighting the war on terror. It affects our ability to maintain and improve our transportation infrastructure and enhance our education system. You will be hearing more about that from Senator ALEXANDER. It further contributes to the public perception that Congress has no appreciation of the importance of management and the impact of our irresponsible conduct on the delivery of services to the people in the States—our constituents. It is incredible to me, as someone who has been a mayor and Governor, that the Senate has not completed its appropriations work.

In Ohio, the law mandated that we complete our appropriations responsibilities by the end of the year. And it was the same way when I was mayor of the city of Cleveland. The city charter mandated that we do our work. If we had not completed our budget and appropriations work, we would have been reprimanded by the media roundly and recalled by the voters. Of course, we were also bound to balance our budget, which this body has been unable to do since 2000.

We have been on the path of fiscal irresponsibility for too long. Given the facts, it is an indication to the American people that we are not doing our job, our work. Congress may hold the power of the purse, but we undermine our credibility by starving good managers and agencies of necessary resources and by turning a blind eye to failing programs. This is about more than allocating funds, it is about good management and good public policy.

All of us, on a bipartisan basis, should pledge that we will not shirk our responsibilities by passing a de facto omnibus piece of legislation. As important, at this stage of the game, we should vow, all of us—the majority leader and our minority leader should come together on the floor of the Senate and pledge to the American people that we are going to pass our budget, and we are going to get our appropriations done by the deadline we are supposed to have it be done by, so next year we are not repeating the same thing we have this year.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee is recognized.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right. We are now in morning business.

THE BUDGET

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, no Member of the Senate has more experience in various levels of government than the Senator from Ohio, Senator VOINOVICH, who just spoke. He was a commissioner, a mayor, a lieutenant Governor, a Governor, and a Senator. Since he has come here, no Senator has spent more time on the drudgery—some Senators would say—of understanding the operations of government, how the budget decisions we make affect different parts of the Federal Government, different parts of society, the State and local governments, and how the civil service system works, how employees are fairly treated. I salute the Senator for his work.

I think we ought to hear him carefully when he reminds us of one of the most obvious solutions to that problem, the 2-year budget. That idea has broad support in this Chamber, and it is a very simple idea. It says we will make our budget every 2 years. If we have to make adjustments in the odd year, we can do that. We already do that from time to time, but then in the intervening year, we would have plenty of time to look over our programs, make sure they work, and perhaps repeal some of them and add some better ones and check the stacks of regulations. If you look at all of the regulations that small colleges in Ohio and Tennessee have to wade through every year, that stack is very high. I brought them down on the floor one time. Surely, we can get rid of those. On both sides of the aisle we would like to do that. Our process doesn't appear that way. As our Republican whip sometimes says, process is often substance in the Senate, and a 2-year budget would be a force for orderliness, a force for review of programs; it would cause us to repeal and change and revise laws.

We have plenty of forces for adding laws or spending more money. We need forces for review and repeal. The people around America who elect us and depend upon us to provide the funds we provide in an orderly flow could then make their plans and spend the money more wisely. The example the Senator from Ohio gave is a good one, about the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. On this floor, what do we hear more often than anything else now? We hear let's stop the dependence upon foreign oil or at least let's reduce it, and let's deal with global warming.

How do we do that? There are lots of different ways to try to do that, but in a country such as ours that produces and uses 25 percent of all of the energy in the world, we don't have many ways to produce large amounts of carbon-free energy; 70 percent of our carbon-free energy comes from nuclear power in the United States. So when we slow down the processing applications for new nuclear power plants—a process we invented, which our Navy used without incident since the 1950s, a process

which France uses to produce 80 percent of its power—so when we slow ourselves down, we are delaying urgent action on global warming and on dealing with our dependence upon foreign oil.

That was a very good example the Senator used. I salute his interest and his call for a biennial budget, a 2-year budget, and his focus on the practical problems our failure to deal with appropriations bills on time cause, and it can be shared all around the room.

TEACHER INCENTIVE FUND

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I wish to speak about a casualty of the budget process. It is a very disheartening development, and I hope it is an oversight, not the first symbol of the new Democratic Congress's education agenda because I don't think it should be, and I cannot believe that it would be. I don't believe that the Senator from Massachusetts, the Senator from Iowa, the Senator from Rhode Island, and others who care about education would agree that killing the Teacher Incentive Fund should be held up and said here is the way the Democrats plan to approach education. But, in fact, that is what came over from the House of Representatives. What they did was kill a Federal program, passed in a bipartisan way in No Child Left Behind called the Teacher Incentive Fund. They reduced the Teacher Incentive Fund from \$100 million a year to \$200,000 in this current year. What does the program do? It helps reward outstanding teachers and principals of children who attend low-income, poor-performing schools. That is what it does. This cut threatens a crucial effort to improve the Memphis schools and also other schools all across our country in 16 major cities and States.

It is a disheartening development and one I hope will change. The loudest criticism I hear of the No Child Left Behind bill is it is not properly funded. What kind of response is it to say we are going to knock \$100 million out of the most important program that helps to train teachers and principals to help low-income children in poor-performing schools succeed? That doesn't make much sense to me.

So I have submitted an amendment—it is on file—which would increase the teacher incentive fund from \$200,000 this year to \$99 million, which is the level that was approved in the appropriations bill. It is also the level President Bush requested for the current year. The funding comes out of funds available under the education title of the Labor, HHS, Education section of the joint funding resolution. Unlike a traditional appropriations bill, the resolution doesn't fully allocate all of the dollars under the education title. So as a result, I have been advised by the Legislative Counsel's Office that our amendment doesn't need an offset.

I will add that President Bush, in the budget we received this week, has asked for \$200 million for next year. So

this would permit us to do what was intended to be done by the No Child Left Behind bill.

I ask unanimous consent that my amendment be printed in the RECORD at the end of my remarks.

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

(See Exhibit 1.)

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, let me mention a few of the details of the Teacher Incentive Fund, so that we can understand what happened in the House of Representatives. The Democratic majority in the House reduced the teacher incentive fund from \$99 million to \$200,000. The proposed cut jeopardizes 5-year grants that were made to 16 grantees, largely serving big-city schools and low-income students with low academic achievement. The cut will take away funds from Chicago, Denver, Memphis, Houston, Dallas, and Philadelphia. The proposed cut will take away funds from State programs in New Mexico and South Carolina. Many of these programs were developed in full consultation with teachers and principals and with their unions. As an example, Philadelphia's grant application was written and endorsed by the local teachers union. So I am trying to figure out who is against this? It would not be the teachers, principals, or the districts. Neither Democrats nor Republicans. So how did it get cut from \$100 million to \$200,000?

One of the most critical problems we have to solve today is how to retain outstanding teachers and principals. The more we understand about low-performing schools, the more we understand that, except for the parent, the most important people in that child's ability to succeed are the teacher and the principal. The quality of the teacher and the quality of the school leaders are the most important factors. The elimination of funding, as has been done by the joint funding resolution, could have a significant impact upon the Teacher Incentive Fund. As a result, for example, of the joint funding resolution, the Department of Education has already decided that they will have to delay the national evaluation of the Teacher Incentive Fund until 2008. So we have delayed, for a year, helping these children be exposed to teachers and principals who have more capacity, and we won't learn anything from that evaluation for another extra year.

The proposed cut in funding in the current year will undermine the current grant competition that is going on. Applications are due on February 12, 2007. So say you are sitting in Providence, Knoxville or San Francisco, and you are in the midst of an application to bring in New Leaders for New Schools or some other group, they say to the school district: OK, we will train all your teachers, send them to the Wharton School in the summer and work with them for a year, and on a continuing basis we will help these principals and teachers; we will help

the principals become better school leaders. But then the New Leaders for New Schools will say you have to give the principal some autonomy, let them hire and fire the best teachers, let them make decisions. So there is this alliance. In many cases, the teachers union is involved, as in the Philadelphia case. They make concessions. So everybody is working together to try to say: What can we do to help these low-performing schools succeed?

Today, in a roundtable we had about No Child Left Behind, I suggested we are not talking about No Child Left Behind in the correct way. We are catching people doing things wrong instead of catching people doing things right. The truth of the matter is that across our country we have about 100,000 schools, more or less, and in about 75 percent of those schools, they are succeeding in what we call adequate yearly progress. Those schools are succeeding in adequate yearly progress. Now, those schools, I would say, are high-achieving schools. What we find is most of the schools I would call achieving schools. Any school that has succeeded in No Child Left Behind for a couple of years I would call a highest achieving school. One which has succeeded for 1 year would be a high-achieving school. One with only one subgroup of children who don't quite make the standards, I would call that an achieving school. So we have mainly 15, 20 percent of our schools where we need to go to work and do things differently.

These children can succeed. Memphis has a large number of low-performing schools, as we call them, but it is not because the children cannot learn. I was there during spring break last year at one of the new public charter schools in Memphis. They go to school early in the morning and leave at 5 in the afternoon. They were in AP biology courses in the 10th grade. They can all learn. They needed extra help in a different way, and the difference it has made there starts with a good school leader and an excellent teacher. Memphis plans to take this money from the Teacher Incentive Fund and take every single one of its principals through this year-long training, the summer programs, the continuing education, and then Memphis decided to give those teachers autonomy.

So that is what we are killing when we kill this program, not just in Memphis, but in many other school districts. The northern New Mexico network, the DC public schools, the Chicago public schools, Denver, Mare Island Technology Academy in California, Houston, Guilford County, NC, Alaska, the whole State of South Carolina, a couple of districts in Texas—they are all in the middle of this. They are making applications for more. They expect these to be 5-year grants. They are doing what we asked them to do, and then we come along and kill the program right in the middle of the year.