the next 5 years the debt will rise inexorably to $11.6 trillion, and all of this at the worst possible time, before the baby boom generation retires. This is a time we should be paying down debt, not exploding debt. There is no sober or objective observer who does not recognize the fundamental threat to our economic security caused by these budget policies. We must change course.

The result of this rising debt is that increasingly we are borrowing the funds to float this boat from abroad. In 2005, our country borrowed 65 percent of all the money that was borrowed in the world by countries. Let me repeat that. In 2005, our Nation borrowed 65 percent of all the money that was borrowed by countries in the world. The second biggest borrower was Spain. They borrowed one-tenth as much.

As we look back, this is a historic time with great challenges. The question before this body and the Congress of the United States and this President will be whether we are honest with the American people about the extent of our financial problems. This is a moment of testing. Will we be honest? Will we be truthful? Will we make the tough choices that are required?

In the last 5 years, foreign holdings of our debt have doubled. In other words, it took 42 Presidents 224 years to run up $1 trillion of U.S. debt held abroad. That amount has more than doubled in just the last 5 years. This is a course that cannot be sustained. It must be changed.

I come to the floor today to offer an important measure, a measure to restore fiscal discipline, by reimposing the pay-go rule that was so effective in the 1990s at helping us get back on track after the record deficits of the 1980s.

We know that pay-go works. It was instrumental in our turning deficits into surpluses in the 1990s. The pay-go rule says simply this: If you want more tax cuts you have to pay for them. If you want new mandatory spending you have to pay for it. If you do not pay for it, you have to muster a supermajority vote on the floor of the Senate for more tax cuts or new mandatory spending to go forward.

That is a good rule, but it will not solve the problem. No one should overpromise. No one should overstate. It is going to take serious, consistent discipline on spending, on revenue, and on entitlement reform for us to truly make progress.

In the joint caucus this morning, the leadership called on all of us to set aside partisanship to make genuine progress. This is going to be an area in which we have that opportunity. We have a window of opportunity, before we get into the next election cycle, to face up to these fiscal challenges. One part of a successful strategy is to reimpose the pay-go discipline. It is not the only thing, but it is a beginning.

In addition to reestablishing the pay-go rule, the legislation I am offering today prohibits the use of the fast-track reconciliation process for any legislation that would add to the deficit. Reconciliation is a big word; it is a fancy word. It confuses people, but it is a special process in the Senate to go around the standard rules of this body to pass legislation. It circumscribes Senators' rights. It restricts their ability to offer amendments. It sets a strict time limit on debate. The only reason those procedures were ever adopted in this body—the only reason—was to reduce budget deficits. Unfortunately, over the last 6 years those special procedures have been used to increase deficits, not to reduce deficits. That stood the whole rationale for reconciliation on its head.

It is time for us to go back to the reconciliation process that was intended and only use those extraordinary procedures for reducing deficits, not for increasing them.

(Mrs. MURRAY assumed the Chair.)

Mr. CONRAD. I note the very distinguished Member of the Senate, the Senator from the State of Washington and a member of the Senate Budget Committee, who understands full well the subject we are discussing today and the critical need for our Nation to return to a more sound fiscal course.

I offer this measure today to restore fiscal discipline. I ask my colleagues to bring their ideas to the Senate floor. You have my commitment as the incoming chairman of the Senate Budget Committee to do my level best to bring our country back. Our country needs us now. Our country needs us to be truthful and honest and to work together.

I felt, in the Senate Chamber this morning, a new spirit, a new sense of possibility—perhaps the chance that we can come together in a way that would make us all proud.

I very much hope we seize that opportunity. I look forward to working with my colleagues to achieve that result.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

REINTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION

Mr. SPECTER. Madam President, on the first day of the 110th Congress, it is an appropriate occasion to reintroduce legislation which was introduced in the 109th Congress which was not enacted. I have a number of legislative proposals to introduce today and to discuss.

(The remarks of Mr. SPECTER pertaining to the introduction of S. 185, S. 186, and S. 187 are located in today's RECORD under ''Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.''

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I strongly support legislation introduced earlier today which would permit Federal funding to be used for embryonic stem cell research. That is a subject which has been at the top of my agenda since November of 1998 when stem cells were first exposed. Within 10 days, in December 1998, the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health, Human Services and Education held the first hearing to explore the potential of embryonic stem cell research. In the intervening years the subcommittee has held some 19 hearings exploring this issue in some great detail.

The Specter-Harkin bill was passed last year, vetoed by the President, and the bill is back before the Congress this year where it may be possible to override a Presidential veto. That depends upon how much public support there is—really, how much public clamor there is—for this legislation to be enacted.

Embryonic stem cells have the potential to replace diseased cells. They are a veritable fountain of youth. They have enormous potential in Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, cancer, heart disease, and almost all of the known maladies. I don't know of any malady where they are not a potential for a cure because the cells in a person's body become diseased, and if the embryonic stem cell can replace the diseased cell, there is a potential for a cure.

There is opposition to this legislation on the ground that it would destroy life. That is factually not correct because there are some 400,000 embryos created for in vitro fertilization which are going to be destroyed. When the issue was raised about destroying a life, the subcommittee took the lead and appropriated $2 million to facilitate adoptions. There have only been about 100 adoptions in the past several years, so there is no doubt that using some of these embryonic stem cells will not destroy life because they will not be used to create life. If there were any chance they would create life, I would not consider utilizing them for medical research.

When the alternative is to throw them away or to use them, it seems to me a clear choice to utilize them to save lives and fight disease. That is the thrust of this legislation.

PRESIDENTIAL SIGNING STATEMENTS

Mr. SPECTER. Madam President, moving now to the issue of signing statements: I had introduced legislation in the 109th Congress to provide standing to the Congress to go to court when the President issues signing statements which, in effect, cherry-picked the provisions in the legislation he liked and disregarded the provisions in the legislation he disliked.

That kind of a proceeding, in my view, is unconstitutional because the

Constitution says that we present a bill to the President; he either signs it or vetoes it. His veto is subject to override on a two-thirds vote. But, the President cannot pick and choose among the provisions of the act.

When we passed the PATRIOT Act, there were some provisions very carefully negotiated as to congressional oversight. No objection had been raised by the Department of Justice in our discussions as we negotiated about the bill. And then, when the President signed the bill, the President specifically said that he would not pay attention to those provisions if he felt that his Executive power would be impinged upon. If he disagreed with the provisions, he should have told us before we legislated.

Similarly, in the McCain Anti-Torture legislation, which passed the Senate 90 to 9, a compromise was struck between the White House and Senator MCCAIN. And here again, the President's signing statement seems to undermine the compromise that was struck.

I am not going to reintroduce the legislation now because we are discussing some modifications with some of my Senate colleagues, and I am going to defer for a brief period of time to see if we can get additional cosponsors.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. SPECTER. Madam President, finally, a brief comment on judicial nominations. During the course of the 109th Congress, the Senate confirmed two Supreme Court Justices, Chief Justice Roberts and Justice Alito, 16 Court of Appeals judges, 35 District Court judges, and 1 Court of International Trade judge. At the close of the 109th Congress, there were 13 District Court nominees on the Executive Calendar, but were held up on a technicality.

I am pleased to say that Senator LEAHY advised me earlier today he is going to put those 13 nominees on the first executive session of the Judiciary Committee next week, so they will be confirmed. There was no objection raised to them in the last Congress, except they were tied up on a concern raised by one Senator about a nominee for the Western District of Michigan.

In the last Congress, we were also able to confirm a number of judges—circuit judges, who have been held up for a long period of time: Priscilla Owen, pending since 2001; Janice Rogers Brown, pending since 2003; William Pryor, pending since 2003; Brett Kavanaugh, pending since 2003.

I ask unanimous consent that my full statement be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of these extemporaneous remarks.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. SPECTER. Madam President, I seek recognition today, to discuss one of this body's most important responsibilities; namely, our responsibility to provide advice and consent on the President's judicial nominations.

At the outset, I would like to take a few moments to remind my colleagues of the Judiciary Committee's success during the last Congress in moving the President's judicial nominees through the confirmation process in a timely manner.

During the last Congress, the Senate confirmed 54 Article III judges, including the Chief Justice of the United States, an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, 16 Court of Appeals judges, 35 District Court judges, and one Court of International Trade judge. The Senate could have, and I believe should have, confirmed 13 more District Court nominees before the conclusion of the last Congress. All of these qualified men and women were favorably reported by the Judiciary Committee without a single dissenting vote. Many of them are nominated to vacancies that have been deemed judicial emergencies. I hope we can promptly move to confirm all of these men and women in the new Congress. Failure to do so will continue to delay justice in courts from Pennsylvania to California. I have asked my friend and new Judiciary Committee Chairman Senator LEAHY to place these nominees on our Committee's very first executive business meeting. I am happy to report that he has agreed to do so.

I remind my colleagues that at the beginning of the last Congress judicial confirmations, particularly to the Circuit Courts, were at a virtual standstill with many nominees subject to filibusters. Much of the debate in this chamber during the first months of the 109th Congress involved whether or not to invoke the so-called ''Constitutional Option,'' whereby the rules of the Senate would be altered to allow for a vote on Circuit Court nominees. Thankfully, the Senate managed to avert a major showdown over this debate and instead confirmed highly qualified nominees to the Courts of Appeals, several of whom had been pending for many years. These included Priscilla Owen (pending since 2001); Janice Rogers Brown (pending since 2003); Bill Pryor (pending since 2003); and Brett Kavanaugh (pending since 2003).

So in the last Congress we managed to move to a vote on many long languishing nominees. We also moved expeditiously on new.nominations. It was my practice as Chairman to schedule a prompt hearing on every judicial nomination as soon as all necessary materials were received and the nominee was prepared to move forward. Once given a hearing, every nominee was placed promptly on the Committee's agenda for consideration. I believe our practice, while avoiding unnecessary delay, also ensured that each nomination was thoroughly vetted so that the Senate had the information it needed to come to a vote.

In short, the Judiciary Committee and the Senate, by following regular order, carried out our Constitutional responsibilities. As a result, the federal court vacancy rate fell to as low as 4.8% during my tenure as Chairman. This is among the lowest vacancy rates in the last 20 years. Unfortunately, in part because of our failure to confirm the 13 district court nominees late in the last Congress, the vacancy rates have increased during the fall and winter.

I cite this recent history and these statistics as examples of what can be done in this body when we work hard and put fairness ahead of partisanship. I committed myself to this principle as Chairman of the Judiciary Committee and I am hopeful we can continue to work in this vein during the 110th Congress under the Chairmanship of Senator Leahy. Working together, I believe we can avoid some of the acrimony that has poisoned the nominations process in recent years.

In fact, I want to give Senator LEAHY a good bit of credit. He worked cooperatively with us to ensure that nominees were moved during the 109th Congress. There were times when our friends across the aisle could stymie our efforts to process nominees, but Senator LEAHY worked with me to enable the Senate to carry out its constitutional responsibilities.

That is why I am troubled by recent suggestions that it is appropriate to dramatically slow the confirmation process during the last two years of a president's term. Our Constitutional duties remain, despite the fact that we are now beginning a Presidential election cycle. Past Congresses have been very productive on judicial nominations during Presidential elections cycles and we should be as well.

The record shows that the Senate has confirmed numerous nominees during the last two years of every modern president's term in office. For example, in the last two years of the Carter Administration, the Senate confirmed 44 Circuit Court nominees and 154 District Court nominees.

During the last two years of the Reagan Administration, the Senate confirmed 17 Circuit Court nominees and 66 District Court nominees.

During the last two years of the George H.W. Bush Administration, the Senate confirmed 20 Circuit Court nominees and 100 District Court nominees.

During the last two years of the Clinton Administration, the Senate confirmed 15 Circuit Court nominees and 57 District Court nominees.

In many of these cases the Senate was controlled, sometimes by a substantial margin, by a different party than that which controlled the White House. I see no reason why this Senate should not be at least as productive as the Republican controlled Senate which confirmed 15 Circuit Court nominees during President Clinton's final two years in office.

I would also like to address what has been called the ''Thurmond Rule.'' Some have suggested that this so-called rule holds that the Senate should dramatically curtail confirmations after the spring of a presidential election year. Review of the historical record suggests that this rule is more myth than reality.

It does not appear that Senator Thurmond, for whom the purported rule is named, ever publicly asserted that nominations should be delayed due to an impending presidential election. The only comment that could be so construed was made after the Committee approved ten nominees at a September 17, 1980 markup. He stated, ''[L]et me make the point [that] the Minority has tried to be more than fair in considering all of the nominees that have appeared before this Committee. I would remind [the Committee] it is just about six weeks before the election, and I want to say that for a year and a half before the last election, there was no action taken on judges when we had a Republican President.'' However, because Senator Thurmond used this as a point of contrast, the natural implication seems to be that he considered blocking nominations in the lead up to an election unfair.

The fact of the matter is that the Senate has regularly confirmed judges in presidential election years. In the election year of 1980, when it is asserted Senator Thurmond inaugurated the so-called rule, the Senate confirmed ten Circuit Court nominees and 53 District Court nominees. Several of the Circuit Court nominations were high profile