

for families. It provides funding for maternal and child health; nutrition assistance for women, infants, and children or WIC; and the Social Services block grant. And the resolution accommodates legislation to modernize the unemployment insurance program.

The resolution retains the reserve funds passed in the Senate to reauthorize CHIP and expand coverage to eligible but unenrolled kids. This is a personal priority for me.

The budget also works to protect seniors from unscrupulous marketing of Medicare drug plans, thereby laying the groundwork for a strong Medicare bill currently under negotiation.

The resolution also provides for important improvements to Medicare, such as promoting the use of Health IT.

And it would set up a "comparative effectiveness" reserve fund to help us learn what treatments work best and most efficiently to keep Americans healthy. I am working with Chairman CONRAD to introduce legislation on this topic this year.

All of these investments take steps toward addressing the underlying growth in health care costs.

The resolution is also tough on government waste, fraud, and abuse and includes important program integrity initiatives to crack down on wasteful or fraudulent spending in the Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and Unemployment Insurance Programs.

This budget resolution also accounts for important international trade priorities under the Finance Committee's jurisdiction. The resolution establishes a reserve fund for trade adjustment assistance and a separate reserve fund for other trade initiatives. These reserve funds will allow the Finance Committee to realize legislation to reauthorize trade adjustment assistance, as well as pursue legislation to extend trade preferences, reauthorize customs functions, and implement bilateral trade agreements.

Mr. President, I am thus pleased that this budget resolution conference report allows Congress to take action on these important priorities. I look forward to working with my colleagues to implement the improvements contemplated in the resolution. And I urge my colleagues to support the conference report.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. STABENOW). The distinguished majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I am sorry to interrupt my friend from North Dakota, but we are not going to have any more votes tonight. We expect votes early in the morning, as early as 9:30. They will go on throughout the day. So everyone should be aware we are not going to have a vote tonight on the budget or the farm bill, but we will do the budget the first vote tomorrow, and after that we will move to the farm bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Madam President, I thank the leader. I was thinking about

this the other night. We don't thank the leader enough. We are blessed on our side with a leader whom I think every Member on our side has high confidence in because of his good judgment, his fairness, his balance, his willingness to listen and then decide. Even though he may not always agree with any one of us on a particular issue, he always listens, and he does it with respect, and then he decides. He makes a decision. I thank him for it. I know the role of leader is absolutely the toughest job in this town. It is an extremely difficult, demanding job, and our leader does an outstanding job of it. That is why he enjoys the confidence of our colleagues and the affection of our colleagues.

Mr. REID. Madam President, if I may thank the Senator from North Dakota but also say there isn't anything that I agree to out here that doesn't have the full consent of the Republican leader. So even though Senator MCCONNELL and I in public kick and bite and scratch and all those things, I have the ability to work with him on issues, which makes it possible for us to get business done outside the press and a lot of times Senators.

I really appreciate my friend from North Dakota. He and I came to the Senate together. I can remember the first time I saw KENT CONRAD. It was in the LBJ Room. It wasn't named the LBJ Room at the time. We were there for the purpose of indoctrination—I don't know the right word—but we were nominees of our parties. We were running for the Senate in 1986. Neither one of us was expected to get elected. We were both long shots. He was running against an incumbent Senator. I was running against President Reagan and Paul Laxalt. But we surprised them; we won.

We have such a warm relationship. I love Lucy, his wife. When we first came here, a lot of people mixed up Landra and Lucy because they are both short, somewhat dark complected, but we don't mix them up.

I say to the people watching C-SPAN, the only Senators in this Chamber are Senator CONRAD, Senator REID, and Senator STABENOW. Senator STABENOW has indicated in a meeting we just completed that she said the right thing at the right time to help us get to where we are today.

I am embarrassed with the kind words of my friend from North Dakota, but I thank him very much.

Mr. CONRAD. I thank the leader.

Madam President, I wish to indicate to the Chair that we have one other Member on our side who is going to come to the Chamber to talk. Senator WHITEHOUSE is going to come. I think he will only be seeking about 15 minutes, I say to the Chair. He will be here in 10 minutes. He will seek only about 15 minutes. I mentioned this to Senator GREGG. So after Senator WHITEHOUSE, other than Senator DODD, who might still come for 6 or 7 minutes, that will complete speakers on

our side. Senator GREGG told me he does not believe he has any further speakers on his side.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. MCCASKILL). Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE BUDGET

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, as we conclude the discussion on the budget, in which the Presiding Officer participated so eloquently just a few moments ago, I wanted to come to the floor because there is a significant feature in America's fiscal picture that affects this budget considerably but has not really gotten the attention it deserves; that is, the debt of the United States of America that has been run up by President George W. Bush. It is a frightening legacy, really, because of the weight, the fiscal burden of it that will weigh on our children and our grandchildren.

If I may, we calculated the Bush Debt at \$7.7 trillion, and we did it this way. We took the projections for the U.S. budget on the day George Bush took office, which, as the Presiding Officer may recall, projected that we actually would have no debt left at all in our country by as early as fiscal year 2009—and, indeed, there was economic debate among America's leading economists wondering if it is really good for our country for America to be completely debt free. What is the ideal level of debt? Should we maintain some level of debt? Are there potential problems if the United States were to be completely debt free? That was the discussion. That was what America was looking forward to.

The nonpartisan, professional Congressional Budget Office had a projection on where that budget was going to go on the day George W. Bush took office, and that is the top line of our projection. We call it the Clinton budget landscape because it resulted from the economic policies of the Clinton administration which left this country in such good health for President George W. Bush. That was what could have been. The other line is what he did, what this country has done to itself fiscally under George W. Bush. When you compare the difference between the upper line, where the country was going, and where George Bush took us, the difference is the Bush Debt, and it amounts to \$7.7 trillion. To me, that is an almost unimaginable number. So just to kind of give an idea of how many zeros that will be, this is what it looks like. That is \$7.7 trillion. Even in the great State of Michigan, where the Presiding Officer hails from, that is a

big number. To somebody like me, from Rhode Island, it is almost unimaginable. So I asked my staff to give me some means of comparing, some way of thinking about how big that number is.

This is a penny. And I asked my staff: If a penny was \$1 billion and you put a stack of pennies on my desk here, how high would that stack of \$1 billion pennies go to make \$7.7 trillion? Well, they found out that the stack of \$1 billion pennies would have to go 39 feet high to amount to \$7.7 trillion. I don't think the television camera can take this in, but from here to the very top of this room is about 39 feet of \$1 billion pennies. That is the enormous burden on our country from the improvident, wasteful, feckless policies of the Bush administration.

I have a credit card. The distinguished Senator from Michigan has a credit card. If we borrow money on our credit cards, we have to pay interest. American families across the country work to pay interest on mortgages, on credit cards, and on loans of various kinds. Well, guess what. We have to pay a lot of interest on a debt such as we have. And in the recent budget, as the Presiding Officer will recall, that we just passed in the Budget Committee and that we are discussing on the floor, there is \$260 billion in interest, much of it paid to foreign countries, on our national debt—\$7.7 trillion of it run up by one administration, the administration of George W. Bush.

Now, that \$260 billion is another pretty big number. So I asked: What could we do with \$260 billion if we didn't have to give it to the Saudis and the Chinese and the Mexicans and everybody else we have borrowed money from to fund George Bush's \$7.7 trillion debt? Well, here is what we could do: For starters, we could pay for health insurance for everyone. We would have universal health care in this country. And you know what, there would be money left over. With the money that was left over, you could also add a million children—a million children—to Head Start Programs. Universal health care for everyone, a million extra children getting Head Start, and still there would be money left over. You could double every Pell grant, which helps kids in America pay for college and reach out and seize their futures. Universal health care, a million extra kids in Head Start, and doubling every Pell Grant. And there would still be money left over. With that last bit of money left over, you could repair or replace 95 percent of the bridges that currently need repair and reconstruction in America—not 100 percent, only 95 percent. You would have to wait until next year to do that last 5 percent.

That is what the cost to us is of an administration and a Republican Congress that ran up \$7.7 trillion in debt.

So I appreciate very much the ranking member who spoke eloquently last week about the problem of that last \$9.6 billion in discretionary spending

we authorized in the Senate-passed budget above the \$1 trillion mark. We wouldn't need to worry about that \$9.6 billion if his colleagues and President Bush hadn't run up \$7.7 trillion in debt for Americans to have to pay in the future because this administration, frankly, was too cowardly to pay its own way and has borrowed from future generations to pay for the war in Iraq and to pay for tax cuts for the richest Americans. In a country where the difference between the wealthy and the poor, between the CEOs and the workers is growing dramatically, is straining the very fabric of our society, instead of bringing us together, what was the President's solution? Lots more tax cuts for the very richest people, who are doing the absolute best already, the ones who have nothing to worry about except whether they take the Lincoln or they take the Benz. They are the ones who need the tax cuts in this country? I don't think so. But the President did, and he didn't even have the guts to pay for it or find the cuts. He borrowed the money. That is why we are at \$7.7 trillion.

So I think it is fascinating that we are having this budget discussion. I want to salute our chairman, Senator CONRAD, who is absolutely brilliant with the budget. He works so well with people in this body and has such enormous credibility that he is able to work through issues in a very special way—in large part because of his personal character and his credibility. We all benefit from his being able to do that.

But he has had to work very hard to try to bring this budget into balance, 3 or 4 years out from now. It is not easy work, putting this budget together.

When people come to the floor and criticize his efforts and try to knock \$9.6 billion off and worry that this might not be fiscally prudent, it is astonishing when those remarks come from the people who aided and abetted George Bush in running up \$7.7 trillion in money that we owe now to the rest of the world, that we will have to pay off indefinitely, that will be a weight and a burden on the shoulders of this country for decades if not generations.

I actually think we need to do something about the \$7.7 trillion Bush Debt. I recommended that we have a formal commission of some kind, an authority whose job it is to take the best and the brightest people who understand our economy and figure out how we pay down \$7.7 trillion. It is really a disaster.

Some of us have served in State government before we came here. Some of us have served in municipal government. If there is a crisis at the State government level—an economic crisis—if a municipality has a terrible fire in a facility and has to rebuild, you take that problem and you set it aside and you create a revenue stream and you deal with it. You don't try to force it through the regular operating budget of the State or of the municipality.

We may be at the stage where the Bush Debt of \$7.7 trillion is so serious for us fiscally that we should start thinking about getting together a group of the most learned economists, the people who care the most about America's future, who see the hazard to our welfare, to our national security that this kind of debt creates, and can think creatively about how we can set up special revenue streams to pay it down and begin to bring our country back in balance.

I appreciate the courtesy of the Chair in listening to these remarks. I did think as we closed out the budget debate it was important to remind everybody that, for all the big talk the Bush administration may make about fiscal prudence and about being responsible, it is the most fiscally imprudent and the most irresponsible administration in our history. Indeed, President Bush alone has borrowed more money from foreign countries than all 42 Presidents who preceded him—not any one of them, all of them. If we add up everything they borrowed through the entire history of the Republic, in just one Presidency he has them beat.

It takes a little brass to be able to come and argue for fiscal prudence and responsibility and not mention that President Bush and the Republican Congress ran up \$7.7 trillion in debt. I thought we should think about it and reflect on that as this debate concludes.

I appreciate working with the very distinguished Senator from Michigan. Her work on the Budget Committee is very valuable. She is a wonderful colleague to me, and I appreciate the indulgence this evening.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASEY). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. BROWN. I ask unanimous consent to speak up to 10 minutes as in morning business.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, both the international community and experts from across our country have come to a definite consensus. Climate change is not a theory. It is a reality. We may not like it, but we have to confront it. Rising temperatures, melting icecaps, and extreme weather show the increasing effects of global warming in the United States and especially around the globe. Without action, we will be unable to avoid dangerous consequences for our children, grandchildren, and subsequent generations. We risk the health of our citizens, the