

have done quite a bit. I will also speak about the bill before us and the many concerns I have about its effectiveness, or lack thereof.

Right now, I want to speak on the impact this bill will have on the American economy. Like many Senators, I believe global climate change is a great challenge that our Nation should address. I joined Senator BINGAMAN in expressing that sentiment in a bipartisan Senate resolution 3 years ago. That does not mean anybody has produced a bill or legislation that matched up, in my opinion, with the concerns. The way we are doing it in this bill is one way. It has never worked any place it has been tried. I do not know why it should be expected to work in America.

I have great respect for the Senators who have drafted cap-and-trade legislation, but I remain deeply concerned about the steep costs and dire consequences this bill will have on our Nation's economy. I am troubled it will have very little, if any, environmental benefit.

To those who are continuing to say this is an absolute environmental necessity, I hope they will try to gather from the experts who have looked at it just how much environmental benefit we will get from this bill.

The EPA, the Environmental Protection Agency, has concluded this bill would reduce global greenhouse gas by just over 1 percent by 2050. According to the IPCC's own benchmark, such a reduction would reduce average temperatures by one-tenth of 1 degree Celsius in 2050. These rates of reduction are far below the levels needed to mitigate the most serious effects of global climate change.

Now, again, Mr. President, fellow Senators, I am not here just giving a speech. I am trying to give you facts. If facts are the things that come from studies by experts, we have facts on this bill. I repeat, the rates of reduction are far below the levels needed to mitigate the most serious effects of global climate change.

I am troubled by the various studies on this bill. Everyone has concluded it will increase energy prices and decrease economic growth. Especially in a time of record energy prices and economic slowdown, our Nation simply cannot afford this bill. That is not just speculation or clamor. It is a true probability that we cannot afford it.

While these studies confirm that the bill will have a negative impact on our economy, they also reveal significant uncertainty as to what that impact will be. According to CRA International, the only group that included the low carbon fuel standard in its study, motor fuel prices could increase by more than 140 percent by 2015. The EIA projects that the bill could reduce industrial activity by up to 7.4 percent by 2030. The Heritage Foundation estimates that 600,000 jobs could be lost by 2026.

Another cause for concern on the economic side is the estimate of the

impact on gross domestic product. While all studies project a negative impact on GDP, estimates vary from a low of \$444 billion, I say to my friend, the occupant of the chair, to a high of \$4.8 trillion. That range of \$4.5 trillion is as massive as it is inconclusive. It is equivalent to \$15,000 for every American. A careful review of these studies should shake everyone inside of this Chamber.

We must realize that cap and trade is neither our best option nor the only option for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, the Congressional Budget Office Director recently testified that a rigid cap-and-trade program is up to five times less efficient than a carbon tax.

The experience of the European Union, which instituted an emissions trading scheme in 2005, should be highly instructive in this debate.

The EU's emissions have continued to rise under cap and trade, by about 1 percent per year. While the EU's system has failed to reduce emissions, it is having an adverse economic impact with energy prices rising and other carbon intensive businesses fleeing to the developing world.

Europe's difficulties are not the only example of the shortcomings of cap and trade. Last December, it caught my attention when, during an interview on the Charlie Rose Show, former President Clinton lamented the fate of the Kyoto Protocol, saying: 170 countries signed that treaty and only 6—6 of 170—reduced their greenhouse gases to the 1990 level, and only 6 will do so by 2012 at the deadline.

Our best projections, combined with the precedent of failing cap and trade regimes already in place, show that America should take a different path. We have been told that this bill is a market-based approach, but then we read a section that says, "an emission allowance shall not be a property right" and, "nothing in this Act or any other provision of law shall limit the authority of the Administrator to terminate or limit an emission allowance."

Let me explain. These are allowances that are being paid for, in most cases, and the CBO treats them as revenues and outlays. And, the proponents of the bill expect these allowances to be traded like stock and other securities. However, the bill fails to even provide a property right for allowances and permits the EPA Administrator to take allowances or limit them at any time, and in any way. This is the very opposite of a market-based approach, and I will have an amendment in the coming days to remedy this problem.

Furthermore, this bill allows nonemitters to hold possession and trade these allowances. Presumably they will enter into contracts, derivatives, swaps, and other complicated arrangements that may undermine the oversight, transparency, and integrity of the market. This is precisely one of the factors that led us to today's mort-

gage crisis, and maybe this bill creates that blueprint for carbon.

My concerns with this bill are no different today than those that were shared by the full Senate in 1997, when we passed a resolution expressing our opposition to the Kyoto Protocol if brought to the Senate for ratification. Our economy expanded by 5 percent in the quarter before that vote. In the midst of robust growth, the Senate overwhelmingly rejected the idea of a treaty that did not include developing nations or "could result in serious harm to the United States economy."

With many factors now limiting our economy, and with China's emissions today much greater than in 1997, our resolve should be stronger. High energy prices, a housing crisis, and a credit crunch limited our growth to 0.9 percent last quarter. Clearly, we have plenty of challenges to overcome. Our dependence on foreign energy is great, our trade deficit is high, our national debt continues to rise, and our dollar is weak.

As we debate this Boxer bill, we should ask ourselves two questions: What will it achieve, and at what cost? I believe the answer to the first question is very little—even by 2050, this bill will not provide meaningful global environmental benefit. The answer to the second question, however, is too much—this bill will disrupt our economy, add to consumers' pain at the pump, and weaken our Nation's ability to compete in the global marketplace.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET FOR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period of 15 minutes of debate equally divided with respect to the conference report to accompany S. Con. Res. 70.

Who yields time?

The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, as we begin the debate, first I thank my colleague, the ranking member of the Budget Committee, Senator GREGG, for his continuing graciousness and his professionalism as we have sought to find a way to conclude our work on the budget for this year. I also thank his staff. We appreciate very much the relationship we have and the very constructive dialog between us as we have searched to find a way to bring this debate to a close.

With that, I wish to describe the conference agreement in general terms. This agreement, we believe, will strengthen the economy and create jobs. It will do that by investing in energy, in education, in infrastructure. It

will expand health coverage for our kids. It will provide tax cuts for the middle class. It will restore fiscal responsibility by balancing the books by 2012 and maintaining balance in 2013. It also seeks to make America safer by supporting our troops, by providing for our veterans' health care, and by protecting the homeland and rejecting the President's proposals for deep cuts in law enforcement, the COPS program, and for our first responders.

The tax relief in this budget is significant. This conference agreement extends the middle-class tax relief, provides for marriage penalty relief, the extension of the child tax credit, the 10-percent bracket. It also provides for alternative minimum tax relief so more than 20 million people in this country don't get caught up with additional tax obligations. It provides estate tax reform, it allows energy and education tax cuts as incentives to reduce our dependence on foreign oil, and it provides assistance for families who are struggling to pay college costs. It also provides for significant property tax relief and, of course, for the important extenders package.

The record under this administration has been a record of debt and deficits as far as the eye can see. This chart shows very clearly what has happened to the debt under this administration. This President, at the end of his first year, had a debt of \$5.8 trillion. We don't hold him responsible for the first year because he inherited that budget. But over the 8 years he is responsible for, the debt has gone from \$5.8 trillion to \$10.4 trillion—almost a doubling of the debt in this country. This President's fiscal failures are manifest. They are written across the pages of the economic history of this country.

This budget seeks to take the country in a different direction. Under this budget, we reduce the debt as a share of the gross domestic product each and every year, from 69.3 percent of GDP to 65.6 percent by the end of the fifth year. The same is true of the deficit picture under this budget. I am proud to report that we balance the books by the fourth year of the budget. We maintain balance in the fifth year. While the President's budget balances in the fourth year, it swings right out of balance once again in the fifth year. We don't believe that is a responsible course.

Under this conference report, spending goes down as a share of gross domestic product, from 20.8 percent of gross domestic product in 2009 to 19.1 percent of GDP in 2012 and 2013.

We will hear a lot from the other side about spending in this budget and we will hear claims that this takes spending through the roof. Let's compare the spending in this conference report with what the President proposed. In this conference report, total spending is \$3.07 trillion in 2009. The President has \$3.04 trillion. That is a difference of 1 percent. Again, the conference report shows spending of \$3.07 trillion, the

President proposed \$3.04 trillion, a difference of 1 percent. Where did the difference go? Well, it went in those areas I have discussed: energy, education, and infrastructure, all of them critical needs.

On the revenue side, the President proposed \$15.2 trillion of revenue over the 5 years of this budget. We have \$15.6 trillion of revenue—a modest difference, a 2.9 percent difference in revenue. We believe that can be accommodated without any tax increase. There is no assumption of a tax increase in this budget. In fact, as I have identified, there are substantial middle-class tax cuts in this budget. In addition, we believe this modest increase in revenue over what the President has proposed can be provided by aggressively going after the tax gap—the difference between what is owed and what is paid—by going after the offshore tax havens, as well as closing down abusive tax shelters. We believe that difference can be easily accommodated in those ways.

Now, I predict that my colleague, for whom I have great respect and real affection, will stand up here momentarily and he will tell all of us this is the biggest tax increase in the history of the United States. He may even say that is the biggest tax increase—

Mr. GREGG. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. CONRAD. Momentarily.

Mr. GREGG. I was going to say: in the world.

Mr. CONRAD. We have agreement on that. My friend is going to stand up here and say: "The biggest tax increase in the history of the world."

I wish to recall his words from last year. Last year he said about our budget: It includes, at a minimum, a \$736 billion tax hike on American families and businesses over the next 5 years—the biggest in U.S. history.

Here is what happened. There was no tax increase.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. CONRAD. Let me conclude on this thought. Here is the record. We had tax cuts of \$194 billion. That is the record. That is what happened. No tax increase; tax reductions. If anybody wonders, go to your mailbox and look at the checks you have received from the United States Government. That was passed by a Democratic Congress.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that my brief statement not take away from the 15 minutes that has been allotted to the two managers of this budget conference report.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I wish to have the record spread with how we work together here, not as much as we should, but we do it often.

As everyone knows, Senator KENNEDY is ill. He has had brain surgery. He is now in a hospital in North Carolina. Senator BYRD has taken ill. He is

in a hospital in Virginia. My Republican colleagues stepped forward. Senator WARNER said: I will pair with Senator KENNEDY. That is something we used to do a lot. We don't do it as much as we used to. But I will pair, said Senator WARNER, with Senator KENNEDY. That way he is recorded as if Senator KENNEDY were here, he would vote opposite of Senator WARNER and therefore it cancels out the votes.

I called Pete Domenici at home last night and said: Pete, as you know, Senator BYRD is sick. Would you pair with him? He didn't hesitate a half a second. He said: Of course I will.

Now, I want everyone to understand how much I personally, as do we all, appreciate these men stepping forward and doing this in a time of need. It would be easy for them to say wait until we get everybody here and we will have a vote.

But in addition to that, JUDD GREGG last night said: I would be happy to pair with someone if that is necessary. This is above and beyond the call of duty. Senator CONRAD has spoken many times about his affection for JUDD GREGG. They have worked so closely together for so long. I also feel he is one of America's very good Senators. Very few people are as well prepared as he is to come to the Senate. He has been a Member of the House of Representatives, he has been Governor of his State, and now a Senator. He and I don't agree with a lot of the votes we do here, but as far as him being a good legislator, he is truly a good legislator.

So Senator GREGG, Senator DOMENICI, and Senator WARNER I would acknowledge are very outstanding not only Senators but human beings.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, on a point of personal privilege, I thank the leader for coming and making the statement he has. People see this body and sometimes they see it at its worst. This, in many ways, is the Senate at its best: Senator DOMENICI agreeing to withhold his vote to pair with Senator BYRD who could not be here because of illness; Senator WARNER, whom I asked yesterday to pair and who readily agreed he will pair with Senator KENNEDY who could not be here. This is to me an act of graciousness, it is thoughtful, it is respectful, and it is exactly what one would expect of Senator DOMENICI and of Senator WARNER.

I wish to say a special note about Senator GREGG who told me yesterday if we couldn't find someone else to pair with Senator KENNEDY or Senator BYRD, he would be willing to do that. When I told my staff, I told them that is class. I wish to say publicly what I said to my staff privately, that Senator GREGG has demonstrated the highest example of what the Senate should be about and I thank him for it.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that my statement and that of Senator CONRAD's not take away from the time of Senator GREGG because he needs all the time he can get to show that this is the biggest tax increase in the history of the world.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire is recognized.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, let me thank the majority leader and the chairman for their kind words. They would have done the same thing were they in my position, if somebody on our side were ill. I know they would have, because I know the type of people they are, and I thank them for their generous comments relative to my willingness to help on that issue.

I especially want to acknowledge, as they have, Senator WARNER and Senator DOMENICI. This is Senator DOMENICI's last vote on the budget, and Senator DOMENICI and the budget are inextricably identified together. He basically wrote the Budget Act along with Senator BYRD, who regrettably can't be here and whom he is pairing with, and for 30-plus hours now, he has been overseeing the budget as the godfather of it. For him to pair on this matter on this last vote on the budget is a very gracious act, as Senator CONRAD has pointed out.

I also thank Senator CONRAD and his staff for their courtesy and their professionalism. It is always afforded to us as Republicans by the majority staff and we very much appreciate it. We obviously disagree fundamentally on where this budget is going, but that doesn't mean we can't proceed in an orderly manner. As I have said before, although I strongly disagree with this budget, I feel equally strongly that this Nation needs a budget, even though in this instance it is something I will point to as a mistake. But we could have done a lot better.

As a practical matter, I respect the efforts put in by the majority and the majority staff, and especially the chairman of the committee who worked tirelessly on this and defends it very effectively. He has said I will say this is the largest tax increase in the history of the world. Let me confirm that, and let there be no mistake about it—there is the largest tax increase in the history of the world in this budget. We are talking trillions here, which is hard to understand for anyone. It is a concept that is alien to all of us. But this budget talks in the trillions.

This will be the first budget that pushes debt over \$10 trillion. That is a lot of money. Two trillion dollars will be added to the debt as a result of this budget. This will be the first budget that takes non-emergency discretionary spending over \$1 trillion. I suggested we draw the line and say, at least for 1 year, we will hold back and not go over \$1 trillion. That idea was rejected.

This budget has buried in it a \$1.2 trillion tax increase. Yes, it would not occur this year, but it is assumed in the budget. That is how they get to balance in the budget. It is assumed in the outyears. That tax increase will translate, when it kicks in, in 2011, into real increases in taxes for Americans. Although most of us cannot un-

derstand \$1 trillion, we can understand the fact that for families earning \$50,000, with two children, their taxes, under this proposal, over the next 5 years will go up \$2,300. For retired people—and there are 18 million of them—their taxes will go up over \$2,000. For 47 million small businesses in America today—the engines of the economy, of economic growth, the people who create the jobs in this economy—their taxes will go up \$4,000. That is a lot of money. That is money they should be able to keep, and it should not come to the Federal Government. That tax increase should not go into place.

This bill has taxes in it that presume that the capital gains tax will essentially double for many Americans. The dividends tax will definitely double. Rates will jump dramatically. The 10-percent rate will be repealed. The estate tax will jump dramatically.

This bill essentially assumes a major tax increase on working Americans and on small business. In my opinion, that is a huge mistake. The other huge mistake that this budget has in it is it makes no effort at all to control the accounts that are going to essentially bankrupt our Nation for our children, which are the entitlement accounts. We know we are sending this Nation over a fiscal cliff. We know that if we don't act, our children and grandchildren will not be able to afford this Government because of the cost and burdens of Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security.

We know the baby boom generation is alive and is going to be moving into retirement. Yet this bill takes no action—no action at all—to try to remedy this very serious fiscal problem, which is going to occur on the watch of this bill. This is a 5-year budget. So this is a very serious failure of taking responsibility on a key issue of fiscal policy.

In addition, of course, we have strong differences over the amount of spending in the bill. It crosses the trillion-dollar line. The Senator from North Dakota named some of the important things to spend money on. Yes, they are important, but we need to set priorities. Rather than simply increasing spending, we ought to look at programs now on the books, which are not as high a priority as we need, and move the money from those programs into the programs we want to spend more money on. This budget assumes that of all the Federal programs on the books—\$1 trillion of discretionary spending—none will be eliminated, not one.

Let me tell you, there are programs we can eliminate, and we should have made that tough decision. So we have strong opinions that this budget doesn't go where it should go. It fails in the issues of tax policy, entitlement policy, and spending policy. Obviously, the other side of the aisle is the majority—and, remember, they were in the majority last year too—so they have the right to pass their budget. I point

out that last year they claimed they were going to give us a tax cut, and they didn't do it. They took credit for the amendment that said they were going to give a tax cut, but it was never passed. This year, they are taking credit for the same amendment, and I suspect it would not pass again.

What will pass is the tax increase of \$1.2 trillion in this bill on working Americans. That will come to fruition because the majority assumes this budget event. This budget doesn't work without those new revenues. It is a failure, in our opinion, and that is why we oppose it.

I yield back the remainder of my time and ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the conference report to accompany S. Con. Res. 70.

The yeas and nays are ordered and the clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, on this vote, I have a pair with the Senator from West Virginia, Mr. BYRD. If he were present and voting, he would vote "yea". If I were permitted to vote, I would vote "nay". I, therefore, withhold my vote.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, on this vote, I have a pair with the Senator from Massachusetts, Mr. KENNEDY. If he were present and voting, he would vote "yea." If I were permitted to vote, I would vote "nay." I, therefore, withhold my vote.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN) and the Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON) are necessarily absent.

I further announce that, if present and voting, the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN) would vote "yea."

Mr. KYL. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 48, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 142 Leg.]

#### YEAS—48

Akaka	Harkin	Nelson (FL)
Baucus	Inouye	Nelson (NE)
Bingaman	Johnson	Obama
Boxer	Kerry	Pryor
Brown	Klobuchar	Reed
Cantwell	Kohl	Reid
Cardin	Landrieu	Rockefeller
Carper	Lautenberg	Salazar
Casey	Leahy	Sanders
Collins	Levin	Schumer
Conrad	Lieberman	Snowe
Dodd	Lincoln	Stabenow
Dorgan	McCaskill	Tester
Durbin	Menendez	Webb
Feingold	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murray	Wyden

#### NAYS—45

Alexander	Brownback	Coleman
Allard	Bunning	Corker
Barrasso	Burr	Cornyn
Bayh	Chambliss	Craig
Bennett	Coburn	Crapo
Bond	Cochran	DeMint

Dole	Inhofe	Shelby
Ensign	Isakson	Smith
Enzi	Kyl	Specter
Graham	Lugar	Stevens
Grassley	Martinez	Sununu
Gregg	McConnell	Thune
Hagel	Murkowski	Vitter
Hatch	Roberts	Voinovich
Hutchison	Sessions	Wicker

PRESENT AND GIVING A LIVE PAIR, AS  
PREVIOUSLY RECORDED—2

Domenici,  
against

Warner, against

NOT VOTING—5

Biden	Clinton	McCain
Byrd	Kennedy	

The conference report was agreed to. Mr. CONRAD. I move to reconsider the vote, and I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I again thank all our colleagues. This is a significant vote because this is the first time in an election year since 2000 that we have been able to pass a budget. That sets a good example for the future.

I, again, especially thank Senator DOMENICI. This is his last vote on a budget. He, out of respect for this institution, respect for Senator BYRD, respect for the budget process, agreed to pair with Senator BYRD. We thank Senator DOMENICI for that gracious act.

And Senator WARNER, I deeply appreciate your willingness to pair with Senator KENNEDY, who, as we all know, is ill and recovering. You are a pro's pro, and we deeply appreciate the respect that you have shown for our colleague, Senator KENNEDY.

Again, I thank all of the staff who have worked so hard. I again want to conclude by thanking the ranking member, Senator GREGG, for all he did to allow us to complete work today.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, we are all familiar with the phrase "all you can eat." There are restaurants everywhere that specialize in feeding us until we burst. Needless to say, that isn't a good idea. Eating until you just can't eat any more isn't just a waste of resources, it is likely to have a severe impact on your future health—and your current waistline!

We are in a similar fix here in the Congress. Our country is in a sinkhole of debt and it's almost as if we have adopted a philosophy of "all you can spend" around here. Spending is out of control and we are doing more than just wasting resources—we are destroying the future of our children and our grandchildren. Our friends on the other side of the aisle don't seem to see what a terrible problem we face. Just like that all you can eat line, our colleagues are heading back to the buffet for one more full plate and leaving the bill for our children to pay. As the old adage says so well, you can pay me now, or pay me later—and our colleagues have chosen to leave the bills for later. We ought to know better.

This week the Senate is considering the conference report for the fiscal year 2009 budget resolution, a blueprint that is supposed to provide us with guidance for spending that reflects the priorities of the Congress. As stewards of the public trust, the Congress needs to make responsible choices that leave a fiscally sound country to our children and our grandchildren. Unfortunately, the budget resolution conference agreement we are debating this week doesn't confront any of the tough choices that face our country.

I will say once again that we cannot sustain the current level of spending without inflicting grave damage on the fiscal health of our country. This conference agreement rejects the President's proposals that slow the growth of spending in mandatory programs, as well as keep a handle on discretionary spending.

It does nothing to shore up the government's fiscal house, and instead leaves the tough choices to future Congresses and the next administration. Yet every day, Americans sit at their kitchen tables and tighten their own budgets to pay for gas, food and other necessary expenses—while we can't even impose meaningful discipline on spending here in Washington.

As stewards of the public trust, we owe it to all American taxpayers to use the funds they provide us in the most efficient way possible. If we do that, then we provide future generations with a strong economy.

As an accountant, I particularly welcome the opportunity to look at the overall spending priorities of our Nation. Fiscal year 2009 ought to be another tight year for spending. This year the Federal deficit is projected to be close to \$350 billion—under the Conference Agreement—which will pale in the face of major demands on resources as the so-called baby boom generation begins to reach eligibility for Social Security and Medicare. We must realistically deal with issues like increasing health care costs, tax policy, burgeoning energy costs, as well as continuing national security obligations. Americans deserve more than another "pass the buck" budget.

Mr. President, here is the truth about what the Democratic budget resolution would do. It will: raise taxes by \$1.2 trillion meaning that 43 million families with children will pay \$2,300 more each year, and 18 million seniors will pay \$2,200 more; increase spending by \$210 billion over 5 years. For fiscal year 2009, exceed the President's requested budget by \$24 billion; would allow the gross debt to climb by \$2 trillion by 2013; last year's budget grew our national debt by \$2.5 trillion. It ignores entitlement reform—there is no attempt to tackle the \$66 trillion in unsustainable long-term entitlement obligations that face our country. The President's budget proposed to reduce the rate of growth in one of our most expensive entitlements, Medicare. This would not cut Medicare at all—it would

simply reduce the rate of growth. This conference report rejects even slowing the growth in entitlements. For these reasons alone, the conference report ought to be rejected.

Congress ought to be considering a budget that reduces the national debt, promotes honest budgeting, and encourages true economic growth by reducing energy costs, reducing taxes, and reducing health care costs and increasing access for all Americans.

Last year, the majority also promised to abide by pay-go rules and actually pay for all new spending. Well, as far as I can see this has not happened, and in fact, pay-go enforcement rules have been weakened through a variety of different mechanisms and smoke and mirrors that taxpayers have ended up with billions in new spending.

Congress must take seriously the warnings from the General Accounting Office and the Congressional Budget Office about Federal expenditures spiraling out of control. We need to make procedural and process changes to directly address these problems. One of the many procedural reforms that I believe would promote fiscal responsibility is a 2-year budget process, known as biennial budgeting.

In fact, in his budget for fiscal year 2009, the President once again proposed commonsense budget reforms to restrain spending. He has several recommendations, including earmark reforms and the adoption of a 2-year budget for all executive branch agencies in order to give Congress more time for program reviews. Implementing these overall recommendations would be a step in the right direction.

The budget process takes up a considerable amount of time each year and is drenched in partisan politics, while other important issues end up on the back burner. The Federal budgeting and appropriations system is broken, and lends itself to spending indulgences taxpayers cannot afford. We only have to look to the mammoth spending bills that nobody has time to fully read or understand before they are passed into law. Last year's omnibus appropriations bill is an example of a system that promotes fiscal recklessness.

This conference report is a missed opportunity. There is a crucial need to enact procedural and process changes that will enable us to get this country on the right budgetary track again. We simply cannot risk the economic stability of future generations by continuing to "get by" with the status quo. The risks are far too great.

The conference report we are debating today is a hollow, tax and spend, big government budget. It makes no tough choices.

FISCAL YEAR 2009

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I would like to thank Chairman CONRAD and the other members of the Budget Committee for their kind words and