

States. A new Federal bureaucracy, as proposed by the President and FDA, is not needed. In 1992, Congress made a bipartisan decision that State officials, not a Federal agency, were best suited to deal with the problem of underage tobacco use. The SAMSHA regulations are a constructive, constitutionally appropriate and cost-effective way to deal with underage tobacco use. The SAMSHA regulations take the right approach. FDA's approach is wrong, excessive, costly, and unnecessary.

THE BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, the impression will not go away: The \$4.9 trillion Federal debt stands today as a sort of grotesque parallel to that energizer bunny that appears and appears and appears on television in precisely the same way and to the same degree that the Federal debt keeps going up and up and up.

Politicians talk a good game—and "talk" is the operative word—about reducing the Federal deficit and bringing the Federal debt under control. But watch how they vote.

Mr. President, as of the close of business, Wednesday, January 24, the total Federal debt stood at exactly \$4,987,847,422,144.35 or \$18,932.30 per man, woman, child on a per capita basis. *Res ipsa loquitur*.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I thank the Chair for recognizing me.

A RECESS WOULD BE IRRESPONSIBLE

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss what the Senate is doing actually tomorrow on a very, very critical and important resolution that would put the Senate in recess for 1 month. To my way of thinking this could be the most irresponsible vote the U.S. Senate has taken in a long, long time. A month—30 days, Mr. President.

I think that such action would be the height of irresponsibility. If we think the American public is losing faith and confidence in our legislative institutions, just wait and see how they react when they see the Senate is voting to take a 30-day recess with all of the work that lies ahead.

The Senate and the Congress as a whole has much work to do, a lot of work to do. The shrinking amount of time in which to do it is something that I would like to discuss for a few moments this afternoon.

The first session of the 104th Congress, Mr. President, was one of the

busiest that we have ever seen. Unfortunately, however, it was one of the least productive. I will cite my friend, Senator BILL COHEN's op-ed piece recently in the Washington Post when he said—I think I can quote—"There's a great deal of motion, but very little movement." I think that aptly describes last year.

That first session of Congress lasted 365 days, 1 whole year. Only two other first sessions have lasted 365 days in the course of the Republic's history, Mr. President, the 77th Congress in 1941-42 and the 102d Congress in 1991-92.

The Senate, for example, was in session for 211 days. We took 613 rollcall votes. The House was in session 167 days. The House took 885 rollcall votes. What was the result of all of this movement and action, Mr. President? Only 88 bills were signed into law, the smallest number of bills becoming law since 1933.

Mr. President, a 30-day recess, like the one that is being proposed tomorrow, is truly unprecedented. A review of the Senate's congressional calendar shows the normal pattern for Congress is to begin work after the State of the Union. A short recess around the President's Day holiday is the norm. However, to simply shut down the U.S. Senate, for us not to work until the beginning of March, is a remarkable inconsistency.

So what does that mean for us today? It means that there is a lot for us to do in a year already shortened by the Presidential election. Some have even suggested that the Senate is arranging its schedule, depending upon the primaries in New Hampshire and the special caucuses in Iowa. I am not here to argue whether that is true or false, but that is being charged.

There are bills awaiting our attention that must be addressed, not to further the Democratic agenda or the Republican agenda, but to help the American people and to make their lives better and to live up to our responsibility.

I rise today to talk about some of this imperative legislation that I think we should be working on now rather than recessing tomorrow for a whole month's period.

For example, we are in the midst of a crisis in agriculture, and this affects all of rural America. In fact, it affects all America.

On January 1, some 25 days ago, the 1990 farm bill expired. Because no Congress in 40 years has failed to pass a farm bill, we are still exploring the ramifications of what it means to live under an expired farm bill. In short, chaos in rural America could very easily result. We need action in this area.

What we know for sure is that because there is not a farm bill, American agriculture is now, in large part, operating under laws enacted in the year 1949.

In the past several weeks, lawyers and staff at the U.S. Department of Agriculture began to piece together just

what this means for farmers, for consumers, and for the taxpayers. For example, while the cotton program operates as is until 1997, the rice program, as we know it, has now been terminated. Today across our country, there is no rice program. There has not been for 25 days. The so-called permanent law, or 1949 law, to which we are now reverting, includes provisions for commodities, such as wheat or corn; however, no provisions for rice.

The Secretary of Agriculture has said he would have to use some general authority under the CCC Charter Act to run a rice program, but research is still underway to see what kind of program he might legally operate.

There is great confusion. Arkansas grows 40 percent of all of the rice produced in our country, but other States, such as California, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, are also large rice producers. Pulling together some kind of general authority and running a partial program could be devastating to the rice industry and to the rice farmers in these five States.

It is not just rice farmers who are very anxious right now. As many of my colleagues have pointed out, most farmers cannot even find out if they will be able to plant a crop, much less what that crop might be. Necessary operating credit, those loans that are so important to the American farmer, will not be extended to many farmers unless the various lending institutions have some idea of what the rules or regulations are in rural America relative to the new farm proposals.

Mr. President, with all of this uncertainty hanging over us in rural America, from producers to millers to ginners to seed salesmen to tractor dealers to processors and all the other businesses that serve the agriculture sector, it is unconscionable, I think, for this Congress to even contemplate recessing for a 30-day period.

Let me give you another example of how the American people are paying as a result of congressional inaction.

Last year, Congress made a legislative error in the GATT treaty which is forcing American consumers to pay millions and millions of dollars more for their prescription drugs every day. We had a debate on this floor. We had a very close vote on this floor.

For instance, the world's largest drug company, Glaxo, today is gaining \$6 million a day in undeserved enrichment—\$6 million a day in undeserved enrichment and profits. This single company has so far gained \$300 million, all of it subsidized by the American consumer from this congressional mistake. We had a chance to correct it. We did not meet that obligation. We must have that opportunity again.

Instead of acting quickly to fix it, Congress has let it drag on week after week after week. If we recess for 30 days, consumers across America will be paying another \$180 million in unnecessary health care costs for their drugs. That is outrageous. But there is no