may have been unconstitutional secrecy and finally disclosed the aggregate budget numbers of the U.S. intelligence community.

I take the floor today, Mr. President, to applaud President Clinton and Director Tenet for taking this first step, but note with some considerable regret that this judgment was made in response to a lawsuit filed against the administration not with the support of this Congress and, indeed, in spite of a vote taken in response to an amendment that I offered on the floor of this Senate.

While I applaud Director Tenet, I also speak with regret that while the budget numbers were offered this year, they specifically were not made as a change in permanent policy, therefore, raising the specter that the American people are being provided this information in 1997, with the possibility they may never be given this information again.

That perhaps leads to the most cynical interpretation of all, that what is really feared by the intelligence community is not the sharing of this aggregate amount of spending with foreign adversaries, but if the American people have this number they would be able to gauge this year to next, to next, and into the future whether or not the intelligence budget of this country is rising or falling, whether it is too large or too small.

What is feared is that the American people will be as engaged in this debate as they are about Social Security spending or health care or education spending or even defense spending, which routinely is a part of the American political debate.

A 1-year number provides precious little information for public debate about the adequacy or the excessive nature of our spending. What, of course, is peculiar about this inability to inform the public is that defense spending, equally or arguably far more important to national security, is so routinely debated. Perhaps that is the reason why defense spending in the Nation today, excluding intelligence, is now 4 percent lower than defense spending in 1980, why in real dollar terms there has been in the last 7 years such a dramatic reduction in defense expenditures, while according to the Brown report, intelligence spending since 1980 in the United States has risen by 80 percent, an increase in spending almost without parallel.

It is worth noting as well, Mr. President, that in the bipartisan Brown Commission report, the commission could find no systematic basis upon which the intelligence budget is even created. In the Commission's words, ''Most intelligence agencies seemed to lack a resource strategy apart from what is reflected in the President's 6-year budget projection. Indeed, until the intelligence community reforms its budget process, it is poorly positioned to implement these strategies.''

Mr. President, other countries in the democratic family of nations have long recognized the need to include defense and intelligence priorities in their national debate over budgetary matters. Indeed, Australia, Britain, and Canada long ago lifted this veil of secrecy. I think, indeed, even the State of Israel, which today faces potentially more serious adversaries at the very heart of their democracy with a daily terrorist threat, long ago decided that its democracy was better served by sharing this information then continuing with the veil of secrecy.

So, Mr. President, in this notable year when for the first time the American people are given access to this information about intelligence spending, the burden now passes to this Congress whether or not we will allow this to be a single exception, or indeed we will now take the challenge and make this a permanent change in how we govern the national intelligence community.

I close, therefore, Mr. President, with the words of Justice Douglas, who in 1974 wrote in making a judgment about whether or not the budget should be revealed, ''If taxpayers may not ask that rudimentary question, their sovereignty becomes an empty symbol and a secret bureaucracy is allowed to run our affairs.''

More than 20 years later, Mr. President, this Senate still faces the same judgment. Director Tenet has met his responsibilities. I am proud that President Clinton allowed him to proceed. Now the question rests with us.

I yield the floor.

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

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, we are preparing to cast a vote on a cloture motion in another 10 minutes or so, and I thought it would be useful to take the floor of the Senate and describe not only for our colleagues but for those who watch the proceedings of this body what exactly is happening.

We are nearing the end of a legislative session. We expect from what the leaders have indicated that the Senate will continue for perhaps another 2½ weeks at the most. We have on the floor of the Senate a piece of legislation that we should consider and we should pass. It is called the ISTEA or the highway reauthorization bill. It is a very important piece of legislation.

Just prior to having this legislation on the floor of the Senate, we had a piece of legislation called campaign finance reform. That is a piece of legislation we should pass as well. It is interesting that both pieces of legislation were brought to the floor and tied up with ropes procedurally so that no one could do anything with either piece of legislation.

Why? One underlying reason: Because there are some in this Chamber who do not want to allow an up-or-down vote on campaign finance reform. They want to crow about campaign finance reform and how much they support it. They want to go out and talk about their desire to have campaign finance reform, but they don't want to allow this Chamber an opportunity to vote on campaign finance reform.

The fact is the American people know better. The American people know this system is broken and ought to be fixed. They know we need campaign finance reform, and they know that the votes exist in the Senate to pass a campaign finance reform bill. In fact, we have demonstrated on procedural votes there are at least 52, 54, perhaps 55 Senators who will vote for campaign finance reform. But can we get to the vote? No. Why? Because procedurally those who control this Senate have tied ropes around both campaign finance reform and now the highway bill in a manner designed to prevent having an uncomfortable vote on campaign finance reform.

When I talk about using ropes, I am talking about procedures called ''filling the tree.'' It is probably a foreign language to people who don't know what happens in the Senate, but it is a rarely used approach, filling the tree, which means establishing through parliamentary devices a series of amendments, first degree and second degree, that offset each other sufficient so when you are finished filling the tree, no one can move and no one can do anything.

The highway reauthorization, which is on the floor now, was brought to the floor and the tree was filled immediately. As I said, it is a rarely used device and almost always used to prevent something from passing.

Mr. TORRICELLI. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. DORGAN. I am happy to yield to the Senator.

Mr. TORRICELLI. I think the Senator from North Dakota makes an important point to the Senate, and that is that many of the American people are asking why, with all that we now know about campaign finance abuse and with the continued erosion of confidence in our electoral system, why a majority of this Senate is not prepared to vote for campaign finance reform.

The simple truth is, a majority of the U.S. Senate would vote today for campaign finance reform, for the most meaningful change in how money is raised and spent and we govern our elections in a generation. But a majority of this Senate is being prohibited from casting votes for this fundamental change, first by the Republican leadership, which is so intent on preventing a vote of the McCain-Feingold bill that it will filibuster, and second,

as the Senator from North Dakota has pointed out, by prohibiting procedurally the offering of any amendments to other legislation that will allow us to make campaign finance reform part of other legislation enacted on this Senate floor.

It is cynical. It is a deliberate, partisan tactic to keep an advantage in the financing of campaigns in this country. The cost is enormous. The cost is enormous, not simply in delaying other legislation, in stopping the work of this Congress, but in continuing and even fueling the erosion of confidence in the American people in the ability of this Senate to solve a real and legitimate problem.

Mr. DORGAN. The Senator from New Jersey is absolutely correct.

The Senator from Wisconsin, Senator FEINGOLD, who is on the floor, has, along with the Senator from Arizona, Senator MCCAIN, brought to us a bipartisan proposal to say, ''Let's fix this issue. Let's do something meaningful about campaign finance reform.''

Every day you look in the paper and there is something new, some new revelation about what has happened in campaign finances, and it is not good. It has been Democrats a good number of times, and I understand that, and I am uncomfortable with that. Today it happens to be Republicans in the Washington Post—$1 million-plus passed from big donors to other groups, then out to campaigns. So what you have is big money being moved into campaigns with an inability to trace any portion of the funds. Yesterday, the same thing, in a little race going on up in New York. Right now, $800,000 put into that race in issue advertising which is unfortunately, under today's system, a legal form of cheating.

I think it would be in the best interest of the American people that we brought to the floor of the U.S. Senate an opportunity to vote yes or no, up or down, on campaign finance reform and stop the silly dance going on.

Mr. TORRICELLI. If the Senator would yield—and I am interested in hearing Senator FEINGOLD on this issue—I think it is important that the American people now understand this is not a choice between a current campaign finance system in the country being governed under existing statutes or an alternative offered by Mr. MCCAIN and Mr. FEINGOLD. The simple fact is there is no governing law of American political campaigns today.

The legal system, which for more than 20 years has governed the financing of our campaign system, has collapsed. Corporate money is flowing into this system. Independent organizations are beginning to dominate the system. Even the political parties risk becoming side voices in a larger chorus. The system in this country of governing our campaigns has ended. The only issue is whether this Senate is now going to allow the majority to govern by passing a new system which will install some new integrity into our system of government. That is, indeed, the issue.

Mr. DORGAN. One of the reasons we are told they don't want to have a vote on this is because money is speech, they say. If that is the case, there are a lot of folks in this country who are voiceless in American politics.

There is too much money ricocheting off the walls in politics. We need to do something about it. Campaign finance reform of the type offered by Senator FEINGOLD and Senator MCCAIN is a step in the right direction. All we need to do is be allowed to have a vote on campaign finance reform.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, on that point, let me agree strongly with the Senator from New Jersey and the Senator from North Dakota and highlight what will happen in a couple of minutes.

We will have a cloture vote that is purportedly on the issue of highway spending, but it is not about highway spending. It is not about transportation. It is not about investing in infrastructure. Those votes will come later. The vote we are going to have in a few minutes is about whether the first session of the 105th Congress is going to adjourn for the year without one single substantive vote on the issue of campaign finance reform and all the scandals that we have seen here in Washington. That is what is going on here. That is exactly what the American people have to be told in a straightforward manner.

The discussion that we just had here indicated what really happened a couple of weeks ago on the campaign finance reform bill. We thought we were going to have a serious debate on that issue. We thought there was going to be an opportunity not only to debate the overall bill but to offer Senators what Senators come here to do—the opportunity to offer amendments and modifications.

I was ready for that debate. These Senators were ready for that debate. The Senator from Arizona was ready for that debate. Even the junior Senator from Kentucky, the leading opponent of campaign finance reform, said he was ready for that debate.

Well, we were wrong, Mr. President. We never had such a debate. We never had such amendments voted on. We had a sham, a con game played on the American people. We had a process that was purposely rigged so that one way or the other the Republicans and Democrats would have to filibuster, or better yet, if possible, make both of them filibuster.

So my point is this: Let's have that debate. Let's have serious, substantive votes on this issue. Let's let Senators amend and modify and give their good ideas to the bill and then let the chips fall where they may.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

FIVE IMPRESSIVE WINNERS OF IMMIGRATION ESSAY CONTEST

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, a few months ago, the American Immigration Lawyers Association held an essay contest entitled ''Celebrate America'' for children in grades four through seven. The children were asked to write on the subject, ''Why I Am Glad America Is a Nation of Immigrants.'' Hundreds of children entered the contest, and I congratulate all the participants.

The winner of the contest was Veronica Curran, a fifth grader in St. Mark's School in Shoreline, WA, who wrote about her family's extraordinary immigrant history—she and each of her brothers and sister were adopted from different countries. Eric Eves of Goulds, FL, Crystal Kohistani of Plymouth, MN, and Joseph Opromollo of Morris Plains, NJ, wrote other top essays. All of the essays reflect pride in America's immigrant heritage, and emphasize the benefits of immigration for the United States.

I congratulate each of these young writers, and I ask unanimous consent that the five winning essays from the ''Celebrate America'' essay contest be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the essays were ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

COMING FROM AFAR

(By Veronica Curran)

Most immigrants are not famous people. They are just regular, ordinary people, like my family and me.

In America, people have opportunities. They have a chance to use their talents to improve America. My family is a good example of why immigrants are good for this country.

My father's family immigrated from Ireland. They lived on a very poor farm which was too small to support everyone. They came to Montana and worked long hours in a dangerous copper mine. They saved their money for their children to get a good education. My father is now a teacher. America helped their family and they helped America.

My mother's family were printers who moved from Switzerland, then to America. They were in trouble for printing books against the government. They were looking for freedom to express themselves. They helped America by being good thinkers.

Many students have immigrant stories like these. But my family's story is different because my brothers, sister and I were adopted from different countries. We all have our own stories. My oldest brother immigrated from Colombia. My sister's ancestors immigrated from Portugal. My other brother and I immigrated from India.

If America was not a nation of immigrants, my family would not have been created. Because America welcomes people from all over the world, our family members have come together to become American citizens. I hope we will grow up to help America.

LIKE A TREE

(by Eric Eves)

Like a tree, America is supported by many roots. Long ago Vikings used to tell tales of an enormous tree that supported the entire universe. The roots of this mighty tree grew down into the underworld. Its trunk held the earth and its evergreen boughs reached beyond the sky. When I think of the United States, I can't help but think of the United States as that tree. We are one of the most powerful nations on earth today, much thanks to our many roots that have come