

and inactions. I agree with that sentiment, and let me add that our failure to make the tough decisions also threatens the very future of Social Security and Medicare, two programs which now keep millions and millions and millions of Americans out of poverty.

Next week, Democrats will propose a budget plan that meets America's priorities and gets our financial house back in order. I urge all of my colleagues to support it because it is intellectually the right thing to do. From a fiscal policy, it is the right thing to do, and from a moral values, pro-family perspective, it is the right thing to do. It is time we delivered real responsibility this week to the American public.

SAVE SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHOCOLA). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I think it is time for Congress and the President to be responsible. I object to the suggestion that somehow government can control the economy and decide whether it is a strong economy or there is good job growth. Government gets in the way every time.

Let me suggest this, Mr. Speaker. If the best possible economic advisors could simply be taken to governments around the world, and with their advice the economy would be strong, job growth would be strong, every country in the world would hire the best possible economists to have a strong economy. The fact is we have a cyclical situation, and for the last several years we have had a worldwide slump in the economy. Europe is even having a more dangerous downturn. In terms of doing some of the things that we should do, and I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that is government getting out of the way and not imposing rules and regulations and taxes that put our businesses at a competitive disadvantage to other businesses throughout the world. We should not be taxing our business in the United States 20 percent more than what other countries, our competitors, are charging their business. It means that we should not have all of these overzealous regulations to impose extra costs on our business that other countries do not have.

The challenge for our kids and our grandkids is going to be huge. Overspending is part of that problem; but not dealing with the unfunded liabilities, not dealing with some of the huge challenges that are going to be faced by our kids and our grandkids is another area where Congress and the White House need to consider.

I would like to bring to mind Social Security. We have known for the last 14 years that Social Security was facing tough times. We passed a Social Se-

curity Reform Act from the Greenspan Commission in 1983. We dramatically increased the taxes and reduced benefits. I bring this chart to the floor, Mr. Speaker, because I want to call to everyone's attention the danger of not doing something in this House and in the Senate and in the White House to correct the Social Security problem.

Social Security is going broke. I just read an article, that it is no big deal because Social Security is not going to become insolvent technically until 2036, because that is how much money is in the trust funds; and if we pay that money back that government has borrowed, then there will not be any problem. But here is the problem and here is the situation, and we are looking for the actuary Social Security Commission report to come out next week.

We are looking at a situation where by 2017 there will be less money coming in from Social Security taxes than is needed to pay benefits. What do we do then? We have got these IOUs that government has taken some of this extra money and spent it for other government expenditures; but that means we have either got to borrow more money or reduce benefits or increase taxes. I just want to report to my colleagues what government has done in the past.

We started out with a Social Security tax of 1 percent on payroll. By 1940, we decided that was not quite enough money; we raised it to 2 percent on the first \$3,000. By 1960, we were short of money again. We decided to raise that tax again to 6 percent on the first \$4,800. By 1980, we raised it again to 10.16 percent on the first \$25,900. In the year 2000, 12.4 percent on the first \$76,000. Now it is 12.4 percent on \$89,000.

So the dangers of doing nothing is that we increase taxes or reduce benefits. So I plead with my colleagues, stand up and do what is right. Do not demagogue somebody's suggestion of a bill by saying that person is going to ruin your Social Security so do not elect them.

I would call, Mr. Speaker, on every voter at every chance they have to go to a forum of individuals running for Congress or for the Presidency, and ask what bill have they offered or signed on to that is going to make sure that Social Security stays solvent.

I have done this since I first came to Congress 12 years ago, all scored by the Social Security Administration to keep Social Security solvent. I chaired a bipartisan Social Security task force of Republicans and Democrats. By the time we spent a year studying the problem, we all agreed that we needed to do something very quickly.

Mr. Speaker, I call on the White House, the President, and Members of the House and the Senate to move ahead to make sure we save this important program.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Members are reminded to direct their comments to the Chair and not to others outside the Chamber.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES BEHIND THE BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Maryland has talked about the budget that was supposed to come out this week, but is now apparently languishing someplace in the back room on the Republican side. The problem apparently is that some want to spend money and some do not, and they cannot agree among themselves and there is going to have to be some twisting and turning before it all happens.

So while we are in that period of waiting for them, I thought that since many in this House have begun to show an interest in Biblical principles on which this country should be run, and certainly on which the government of the United States should operate, I thought it would be good to talk about the Biblical principles behind the budget.

There are a lot of people who want to talk about the Christian teaching and so forth, as though it were an issue of right and wrong and those kinds of things, but if we look carefully at what went on in the New Testament, certainly there is an awful lot of talk about social justice.

There was a day when Christ brought all the people to the mountain and said, I am going to give you a little talk here; it is called the Sermon on the Mount. It is in Matthew 25, for those of my colleagues who have a Bible and read it on a regular basis. They might go and read it. Sort of the latter part of that chapter they will find the instructions that Jesus gave to the people.

A budget is how a society makes a statement about what it really cares about. If we spend our money on military, well that is clearly what we care about. If we spend our money on education, that is another kind of priority. So as the House gets ready to write a budget, we are going to set the priorities of this body for this country for the next year.

Christ started out by talking about feeding people. He said, when somebody's hungry, feed them because when you do that, you feed them in my name. He made it a Biblical priority to do this. Nobody should be hungry. All we have to do is look in this country and look at the problems we have in obesity and all the other things, and we see that this country has problems