

about what is good politics, but what is good for their children and their grandchildren.

As this debate engages, I urge my colleagues in the Senate to listen to the voices of the people around the country and to understand that they expect us to come here to solve problems. That is why they have elected us, not to kick it down the road, not to sweep it under the carpet for another Congress and another President to deal with. If we wait, the cost will be much higher and the American people, the taxpayers, will experience a much higher degree of pain. It is the taxpayers who are ultimately going to have to bear the burden for the lack of responsibility demonstrated by the leaders of today if we choose to do nothing.

I look forward to this debate as it gets underway. I urge my colleagues to acknowledge what is clear, what is obvious: We have a problem. The second thing that is clear and is obvious is that the American people sent us here to solve problems. Let's not sweep it under the carpet or kick it down the road; let's do the responsible thing and acknowledge this is a problem that needs to be fixed. The solution will require bipartisan support in this Chamber and in the House of Representatives. We must work together to save and strengthen Social Security not just for my father's generation but also for my daughters' generation.

I yield back the remainder of my time, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

(The remarks of Mr. MCCONNELL and Mr. BOND pertaining to the introduction of S. 414 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon is recognized.

#### ENERGY PRICES

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, last week, the Treasury Secretary, Mr. Snow, testified before the Senate Budget Committee that high energy prices act like a tax on consumers. Given that, what the Bush administration has called for is a huge tax on consumers throughout the Pacific Northwest. I am talking specifically about their proposal to require that people in our region pay \$2.5 billion more for energy in the days ahead because this administration wants to extract money from the Bonneville Power Administration's ratepayers above and beyond their costs.

I am very troubled about this proposal, particularly because when En-

ergy Secretary Bodman came to my office, I asked specifically about the administration's plan for Bonneville, and not just in the office, but when he came to the Senate Energy Committee for his confirmation hearing. Both times I was assured by Secretary-designate Bodman that he opposed proposals to privatize Bonneville. The assurances were provided just a couple of weeks before the Bush administration's budget was released with the plans that do, in fact, privatize Bonneville, for all practical purposes, by going to a different rate structure that seeks to extract money from Bonneville beyond its costs.

When I met with Dr. Bodman in my office, he was accompanied by Clay Sell, the White House energy adviser. I learned last night that Mr. Sell was well aware of the discussions within the administration that led to the Bonneville privatization proposal at the time Dr. Bodman was assuring me that he opposed privatization. In that meeting, and at his hearing, Dr. Bodman assured me that as far as he knew, the administration also opposed privatization. Clearly, that was not the case. Mr. Sell has since been nominated to be Deputy Secretary of Energy.

I have come to the floor today because the White House and the administration need to get the message. They cannot impose these devastating electricity rate increases on our region, first, without changing the law and, second, without an understanding that I and other Members from our region, Democrats and Republicans, will do everything we possibly can to prevent this misguided proposal to take huge amounts of dollars from our ratepayers and taxpayers. We are going to do everything we can to keep that proposal from passing in the Senate.

Now, I am not, this morning, going to announce a hold on the appointment of Mr. Sell as Deputy Secretary of Energy. In accord with the policy that I and Senator GRASSLEY have led the Senate on over the years, I do announce my holds publicly; and unless something changes, unless the administration drops this misguided concept—a concept that would be so punitive on our region at a time when we have very high unemployment and a world of economic hurt throughout our region—unless the administration drops their proposal, I will be forced to come back to this floor and have a public hold placed on the Sell nomination.

I remain very troubled by Mr. Sell's role in the discussions that took place in my office and Dr. Bodman's testimony before the Energy Committee when I was assured in both instances that there was opposition to privatization. I and other Members of the northwest congressional delegation are simply not going to let a sign be put up on the Pacific Northwest saying: Closed for business and energy tax hikes headed through the roof. This is too important to our area.

I am very hopeful that, working with colleagues—and I am particularly in-

terested in working with my good friend, the chairman of the committee, Senator DOMENICI—we can resolve this matter out so our region will not be devastated economically.

Senator DOMENICI, to his credit, has raised concerns about this misguided proposal to raise our energy prices in the Northwest. I intend to work closely with him, and I am very hopeful I will not have to come back to this floor and put a public hold on Mr. Sell's nomination to be Deputy Secretary of Energy. But if this is not worked out and it is not worked out quickly, I will have no other option because the ratepayers of our part of the world, at a time when they have experienced enormous economic pain, deserve to know there is not going to be a huge additional rate hike imposed on them and one that would do so much to cripple their hopes and aspirations.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

#### SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM

Mr. DAYTON. Mr. President, I rise today because my friends in the Minnesota Republican Party have started a petition online urging me to support President Bush's proposal to strengthen Social Security. I want to take this opportunity to assure the people of Minnesota that I would like to strengthen Social Security just as much as anyone else, and if President Bush or anyone presents a proposal that would actually strengthen Social Security, would protect its ability to pay its promised benefits to present and future retirees and other beneficiaries and also create opportunities to provide additional benefits, I will certainly support it.

I have not yet seen a proposal, including that from the President, that would improve upon the present system while continuing its current benefits.

For all the President's fine talk about helping Social Security's financial future, his current fiscal policies, the ones that are in effect right now, are seriously hurting Social Security's future finances and also weakening the financial strength of the entire Federal Government.

It is a mystery to me why the President is so alarmed by the crisis that he says will occur when Social Security starts running deficits at variously said times, such as 2018, 2028, or 2042, when the rest of the Federal Government's budget, everything else besides Social Security, is running enormous deficits for this year, last year, and for every year projected in the future under his proposed budget.

Last year's on-budget deficit was \$567 billion. A deficit of \$588 billion is expected for the current fiscal year, 2005, and almost \$2.5 trillion more in deficits are projected over the following 5 years under the President's proposed budget. That is the real financial crisis the