2003 (22 U.S.C. 2151 note), which declared the sense of Congress that the Government of Syria should halt its support for terrorism and withdraw its armed forces from Lebanon, endorsed efforts to secure meaningful change in Syria, and authorized the use of sanctions against Syria if the President determines that the Government of Syria has not met the performance criteria included in that Act;

Whereas the President has imposed the sanctions mandated by that Act, which prohibit the export to Syria of items on the United States Munitions List and the Commerce Control List, and has already imposed 2 of the 6 types of sanctions authorized by that Act, by prohibiting the export to Syria of products of the United States (other than food or medicine) and prohibiting aircraft of any air carrier owned or controlled by Syria to take off from or land in the United States;

Whereas the United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, recently stated that Syria continues to maintain more than 14,000 troops in Lebanon;

Whereas United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559 (September 2, 2004) calls for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon and for the disbanding and disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon;

Whereas on February 14, 2005, the former Prime Minister of Lebanon, Rafik Hariri, and 18 others were assassinated in an act of terrorism in Beirut, Lebanon;

Whereas the Secretary of State recalled the United States Ambassador to Syria, Margaret Scobey, following the assassination of Rafik Hariri; and

Whereas, on February 28, 2005, the Prime Minister of Lebanon, Omar Karami, resigned, dissolving Lebanon's pro-Syrian Government: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) condemns all acts of terrorism against innocent people in Lebanon and around the world;

(2) condemns the continued presence of Syrian troops in Lebanon and calls for their immediate removal;

(3) urges the President to consider imposing additional sanctions on Syria under the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003 (22 U.S.C. 2151 note); and

(4) supports the people of Lebanon in their quest for a truly democratic form of government.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida is recognized.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. NELSON of Florida pertaining to the introduction of S. 57 are printed in today's RECORD under ''Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.'')

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. 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. DURBIN. Mr. President, we are in morning business on the Democratic side, as I understand it, for the next 11 minutes; is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct; 10½ minutes.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the President of the United States is on the road today. He is taking his case for privatization of Social Security around the United States. It is an interesting debate. It is a good debate because it gets down to the heart of the question.

I joined with some Democratic Senate leadership—HARRY REID, BYRON DORGAN, and several other colleagues—and we went on the road last week to New York, Philadelphia, Phoenix, and Las Vegas to talk about this issue. We are engaging the American people because we believe it is an important debate.

I think we should start the debate by agreeing on some very basic points, and the first point on which we should agree is that at the end of the debate, Social Security will still be there, it will survive, and we are all committed to it. Any proposal that comes from anyone of either political party that weakens Social Security and lessens the likelihood that it will be there as a safety net for America should be summarily rejected. That is why we on the Democratic side have said we want to sit down with President Bush and the Republican leadership to make Social Security strong, but first we have to take privatization of Social Security off the table because privatization of Social Security, as the President is proposing, will weaken Social Security, it will not strengthen it. It takes trillions of dollars out of the Social Security trust fund, a trust fund that has already been raided by politicians for years. It would be devastated by taking out this much money.

The President is calling for taking the money out of the Social Security trust fund that is going to be used to pay off retirees in the years to come.

How do they make up for this? The President's White House proposes cutting the benefits for retirees as much as 50 percent. So if someone is receiving $1,200 today, had the President's plan been in effect from the beginning of Social Security, they would be receiving around $500. It is a dramatic cut the President is talking about. It would push many senior citizens into poverty, not to mention add dramatically to our national debt, a debt which is already too large, will be increased this year by our deficit spending, and a debt which is financed by foreign countries. China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan hold America's mortgage.

President Bush's privatization plan means that mortgages will grow substantially, from about $8 trillion to at least $15 trillion by the President's calculations. That means our children, who are supposed to be benefited by this so-called privatization, will not only have to gamble their retirement in the stock market, but also face the payment of this debt. That is fundamentally unfair.

Many people have said: Why don't the Democrats come forward with a plan on Social Security? I will tell my colleagues the Democratic plan in three words: Social Security first. If any plan to strengthen Social Security does not guarantee that this safety net and the benefits people can count on for retirement will be there in the years to come, it is not a plan we should even consider. Privatization cannot meet that guarantee.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington is recognized.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, how much time is remaining on the Democratic side?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 6 minutes 50 seconds remaining.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I concur with the remarks of the Senator from Illinois about Social Security. We have heard a lot of talk on this floor. We have heard a lot of talk on the television shows and all around the country in recent weeks about Social Security. We have heard about a supposed crisis in this program, that it will be flat busted or broke, we have heard about the President's view that this social insurance program must be radically restructured, and we have heard that privatizing Social Security is the only way to go.

Now we hear that the President is embarking on a 60-stop campaign tour in an effort to sell his privatization plan to the American people. The American people are not buying this risky privatization scheme.

From the day this debate began, I have consistently said that any proposal put forward to address Social Security must meet a few basic standards. It has to preserve Social Security's guaranteed benefit. It has to preserve Social Security's protections for workers when they are disabled. It has to protect against benefit reductions, especially for women, minorities, and others, and it has to protect our budget from ever-growing deficits.

This week in the Senate we saw the first bill that purports to reform Social Security, and, unfortunately, that new legislative proposal fails my simple test in a few not-so-simple ways. First, preservation of the guaranteed benefit has to be our top priority. The bedrock of Social Security is the guaranteed benefit, and the President's plan calls for cutting benefits by one-third or more. That is a huge hit to every retiree who depends on this system. Like Bush's plan, the new Senate bill will also slash benefits. That plan has a further 7 percent reduction in benefits for early retirees relative to current law that is phased in between 2024 and 2028.

In conjunction with the two pieces of the plan that raise the retirement age, the proposal would reduce benefits for retirees—people who are retiring at 62—by 40 percent by the year 2026, by 50 percent by the year 2054, and it will reduce them by 56 percent by the year

2080. The deconstruction of the guaranteed benefit leads us further away from the real security this program provides, and this country needs to know that even though Republicans do not like to campaign on it, their plans would end the guaranteed benefit Social Security provides today.

A few weeks ago, I joined several of my female colleagues on the Senate floor to speak about how the President's plan would impact women. Unfortunately, this is not a new battle. For years, we have fought to ensure that women and minorities receive a fair shake in Social Security reform discussions. The promise of Social Security is especially important to women. Why? Because women face unique challenges when they retire. We know women make less money throughout their lifetimes, so we know when they retire they have fewer dollars to live on. Women also leave the workforce to raise their families. That is a value that we all support and endorse and want women to be able to do, but that means they have less money when they retire. Finally, women live longer. That is a fact. And they are more likely to suffer from a chronic health condition. So they, in particular, rely on the security of Social Security. With those special challenges women face, we know today Social Security keeps a lot of older women out of poverty. The benefit formulas of Social Security are tilted to give a greater rate of return for lower wage workers such as women and minorities.

Unfortunately, time and time again, we have found that these proposals will impoverish women and slash their benefits. The new plan that has been offered in the Senate is no exception. That plan will cut benefits based on a new life-expectancy requirement. The Senate Republican plan says:

> By factoring increased life expectancy into the base benefit calculation, the rate of increase in benefit payments will be slowed.

Addressing the long-term solvency of Social Security is a laudable goal, but trying to balance the books by slashing benefits for women is absolutely unacceptable. This plan would dismantle the progressive nature of Social Security benefits, leaving women with less money over a longer period of time. So if one is a woman who retires at 62 or 65 and lives to be 95, under these plans they will not be able to make it. Their Social Security benefits will be reduced, and they will not be able to live off what they retired on 30 years prior to that.

It makes no sense to reduce women's benefits. They are already limited by their lower income, and cutting them again simply because they live longer is just wrong. In fact, we should be doing all we can to ensure progressive benefits for low wage earners that are targeted to those least likely to have other retirement savings. All too often, as we know, that means women.

I know I am not going to stand for this attack on women, and I know many of my colleagues are going to stand right alongside me in this fight.

Finally, there is another important issue I will talk about today that no one on the other side of the aisle or the other side of Pennsylvania Avenue cares to talk about, and that is these Social Security plans will add trillions of dollars to an already massive Federal debt, a debt that we are just handing over to the generation coming behind us.

In traveling the country to sell his privatization plan, President Bush has been saying we have an obligation and a duty to confront problems and not pass them on to future generations. Well, many of us on both sides of the aisle agree with him. We should not create new problems for the next generation to handle. The trouble is, the President's plan actually adds to the problems of the next generation. It does nothing to solve them.

This new Republican plan, just like President Bush's, would add trillions of dollars in debt to our country's financial sheets in the next two decades alone. In fact, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities said that the privatization proposal will create nearly $5 trillion in new debt over the next 20 years. That money is going to have to come from somewhere, and it is naive to think that huge new borrowing will not affect current retirees. It is also naive to think that massive new borrowing will not affect programs such as Medicare and Medicaid that really do need our attention. It is naive to think we will simply go along and pass on these massive new problems to our children and our grandchildren.

So once again we are left to consider privatization plans that run up massive new debt on the country's credit card while pulling money away from the Social Security system and ending the bedrock of the program—the guaranteed benefit. That is a recipe for disaster.

The President and his friends in the Senate are fixated on private accounts, even though they will do absolutely nothing to address the long-term solvency of the Social Security program.

Last week, I joined with 41 of my colleagues to ask President Bush to take this risky scheme off the table before moving forward with any Social Security reform. The letter said, in part, funding privatized accounts with Social Security dollars would not only make the program's long-term problems worse, but many believe it represents a first step towards undermining the program's fundamental goals. Therefore, so long as this proposal is on the table, we believe it will be impossible to establish the kind of cooperative bipartisan process we need to truly address the challenges facing the program many decades in the future.

We will not stand for the President's plan for social insecurity. We will continue to stand for future generations against a private solution that simply adds trillions of dollars in debt to future generations. We want to be proud of what we pass along to our children and grandchildren.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. 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. DURBIN. Mr. President, I do not know if it is appropriate at this time to ask that we return to S. 256, the pending business of the Senate.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

BANKRUPTCY ABUSE PREVENTION AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT OF 2005

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 256, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

> A bill (S. 256) to amend title 11 of the United States Code, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Dorgan/Durbin amendment No. 45, to establish a special committee of the Senate to investigate the awarding and carrying out of contracts to conduct activities in Afghanistan and Iraq and to fight the war on terrorism.

Reid (for Baucus) amendment No. 50, to amend section 524(g)(1) of title 11, United States Code, to predicate the discharge of debts in bankruptcy by an vermiculite mining company meeting certain criteria on the establishment of a health care trust fund for certain individuals suffering from an asbestos related disease.

Dodd amendment No. 52, to prohibit extensions of credit to underage consumers.

Dodd amendment No. 53, to require prior notice of rate increases.

Kennedy (for Leahy/Sarbanes) amendment No. 83, to modify the definition of disinterested person in the Bankruptcy Code.

Harkin amendment No. 66, to increase the accrual period for the employee wage priority in bankruptcy.

Dodd amendment No. 67, to modify the bill to protect families.

Dodd (for Kennedy) amendment No. 68, to provide a maximum amount for a homestead exemption under State law.

Dodd (for Kennedy) amendment No. 69, to amend the definition of current monthly income.

Dodd (for Kennedy) amendment No. 70, to exempt debtors whose financial problems were caused by failure to receive alimony or child support, or both, from means testing.

Dodd (for Kennedy) amendment No. 72, to ensure that families below median income are not subjected to means test requirements.

Dodd (for Kennedy) amendment No. 71, to strike the provision relating to the presumption of luxury goods.