

boom since World War II; and an unemployment rate that has stayed at or below 5 percent for more than 15 months. The current rate of 4.5 percent is just remarkable.

The crash of 2000 yielded to gains that have sent the Dow Jones Industrial average to an all-time high. We have created more than 7 million jobs since August 2003. These gains are no accident. They are the result of the stimulative tax relief we passed. These policies clearly worked, and they should be kept in place.

Republicans used the strong economic climate to cut the deficit. We cut it in half even more quickly than anyone thought we would. And working together, across the aisle, we must continue that trend and balance the budget within 5 years.

Another focus of this Congress is the overwhelmingly popular and effective prescription drug relief for seniors. President Bush and the Republican Congress gave seniors the Medicare prescription drug care benefit they had waited on for decades. We cannot "scrap" this program, as some would like. And we will oppose any effort to do so.

A spirit of cooperation will lead to a heightened respect for fairness—and ensure that the same number of judicial nominees that were confirmed in the final years of the last three administrations are confirmed in the last 2 years of this one.

Americans want judges to uphold the original intent of the Constitution, not rewrite it. Judicial activism has divided the courts, the Congress, and the Nation for too long. If our work of restoration and a new civility is to take hold, we must recommit ourselves to the ideal of judicial restraint.

Like the three Presidents before him, President Bush will spend his last 2 years in office with the opposition party in control of the Senate. Like them, he has a right to expect that his nominees will receive an up-or-down vote.

The voters recently sent us a message. They told us to solve the problems that face this Nation. They expect us to win the wars we wage. And they expect us to be men and women of principle.

The people of Kentucky gave me the great honor of my life when they first elected me to the Senate. And I have gone about my work here with them foremost in my mind.

I have fought hard to advance and protect the values that matter most to the people of my State.

It is because of another election that I stand here today. I am honored that my colleagues chose me to lead them at this important moment in our history. I take my duty seriously.

I am filled today with a sense of purpose—for party, yes, but for this institution and for our Nation first, for their renewal.

Elections are about ideas, and here are some I hold most dear.

I believe the state exists to serve individuals and families, not the other way around.

I believe everyone fortunate enough to call himself or herself an American should be able to pursue their dreams freely.

I believe God has blessed this country richly, and that the proper response to the gift of freedom is to defend it.

And I believe that the first duty of Government is the defense and protection of its citizens.

So I am eager to work with my colleagues to find bold solutions to big problems. Yet on some things I will not yield.

I will never agree to proposals that weaken the security of our citizens at home or the capabilities of our Armed Forces abroad.

I will never agree to a tax increase on working families or small businesses. Our economy is strong because of the hard work and enterprise of Americans. We will not undermine that spirit by taxing it.

I will never agree to retreat from our responsibility to confirm qualified judicial nominees.

Bipartisanship, cooperation and accomplishment; yes. Civility; yes. But we will remain true to our principles.

Henry Clay was a great Kentuckian. He spent the last 2 years of his life using the tools of the Senate to save his country. His devotion to the cause of national unity was so great that one rival called it "a crowning grace" to Clay's public life.

Clay shows us that divided government need not be divisive. Indeed, it often leads to historic agreements that unity governments have little incentive to achieve.

And so, working together, forgetting past grievances, forging new alliances, we can solve the difficult issues of the day. This is the purpose of the Senate and the privilege of its Members.

If our steps are guided by this simple principle, then this 110th Congress will have met its responsibility on behalf of all Americans, and strengthened this institution for the unseen challenges that will always lie ahead.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the next 2 hours of morning business be controlled as follows: the first 60 minutes under the control of the majority, the second 60 minutes under the control of the minority, with Senators therein limited to 10 minutes each.

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

The assistant majority leader.

#### A NEW DIRECTION FOR AMERICA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is my honor to follow the speeches that have been given by my new majority leader,

Senator HARRY REID of Nevada, and my new Republican leader, Senator MITCH MCCONNELL of Kentucky. It is a great honor for me to stand this day in the Senate as the assistant Democratic leader. I cannot express my gratitude to my colleagues for entrusting me with this responsibility.

I come to this moment with a sense of amazement. Some 40 years ago, as a college student in this town, I first set foot in the old Senate office building as an intern, never dreaming that 40 years later I would be standing on the floor of the Senate in this capacity. It is indeed a great honor.

I do not know how many men and women have lived in the United States of America in our history—hundreds of millions, for sure. Today there are some 300 million who count America as their home. In the entire history of the United States of America, from its creation, as of today, as of this moment in our history, 1,895 men and women have had this high honor of serving in the Senate. Today, we were joined by 10 more.

Their life stories, like the stories of many of us, are the stories of America: stories of immigrant families, stories of struggle, stories of dreams that finally resulted in an election to this great body in the Senate.

I imagine if you called on some of the experts in U.S. history—even those who served for quite a few years in the Senate—and asked them how many of the 1,895 Senators who have served here they could remember, they would be hard pressed to come up with a long list. As it happens in most walks of life, a few people stand out in history. But most are part of a parade, a parade that passes by many times anonymously.

In the desk drawers of each of our desks here there is a quaint little Senate custom. I was talking to Senator John Glenn of Ohio about it today. Senators who have served here, despite what they were told by their teachers in grade school, are encouraged to scratch their names in the bottom of the desk drawer. I happen to be sitting at the desk of former Senator John Glenn of Ohio, and my former mentor and inspiration, Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois. I would imagine if you look in these desk drawers, there will be many names you do not recognize. The point I am trying to get to is this: Members of the Senate, men and women, come and go, but, thank God, this Nation endures. And it endures because of the sacrifice each makes for the common good of this Nation.

We have weathered so many storms—9/11 the most recent but, of course, the Civil War, which almost tore us apart—and time and again throughout our history men and women in this body, in the Senate, have decided the good of this Nation was more important than their individual personal ambition.

We have another similar moment in history. It is interesting how critical Americans are of their politicians; and