

framed within a balanced federal budget, we will soon be witnessing enormous VA staffing reductions, degradation of VA health care quality, the termination of needed programs, and the closure of VA hospitals. Our hopes of establishing VA outreach clinics in such communities as Aberdeen, South Dakota will be impossible without an increase in funding.

That is why Senator WELLSTONE and I are offering this amendment. The veterans community has done all the research and is acutely aware of the glaring health care needs that the VA must contend with in order to care for our nation's veterans. Our amendment would take \$1.3 billion from the non-Social Security surplus and designate it as emergency spending for veterans' health care. The funding required for this amendment represents a minute fraction of the total federal budget that we are debating here today. However, the funding we set aside to improve accessibility and quality of care within our veterans health care system will provide a tremendous boost for an already stretched and fractured VA medical system.

Mr. President, since I began my service in Congress over twelve years ago, I have held countless meetings, marched in small town Memorial Day parades, and participated in Veterans Day tributes with South Dakota's veterans. As the years go on their concerns remain the same. To ensure that Congress provides the VA with adequate funding to meet the health care needs for all veterans. Without additional funding South Dakota VA facilities will continue to face staff reductions, cutbacks in programs, and possible closing of facilities.

Too often, I have received letters from veterans who must wait up to three months to see a doctor. For many veterans who do not have any other form of health insurance, the VA is the only place they can go to receive medical attention. They were promised medical care when they completed their service and now many veterans are having to jump through hoops just to see a doctor.

It is time for Congress to end this neglect and fiscal irresponsibility when it comes to providing decent health care for veterans. I think Senator WELLSTONE would agree with me that no one in this body would accept three years of flat-lined budgets if we were talking about the Department of Defense or national security funding. But that is exactly what we've done to our veterans. Every year we labor through the appropriations process and every year veterans funding is treated as an afterthought and not one of our first priorities.

As Congress makes spending decisions for fiscal year 2000, we also will have to decide what to do with the non-Social Security surplus for next year.

Shouldn't we be able to use some of that surplus to address the immediate problems of veterans health care? I think our veterans deserve nothing less, and we should make a committed effort to give the VA all the resources it needs to operate effectively.

I want to thank my friend, Mr. WELLSTONE, for working with me on this endeavor to do what we feel is our obligation to our veterans. The veterans community is fortunate to have such a vigilant advocate in Senator WELLSTONE who has displayed tremendous passion and leadership when it comes to ensuring that our nation's commitment to our veterans is not forgotten.

As we enter the twilight of the Twentieth Century, we can look back at the immense multitude of achievements that led to the ascension of the United States of America as the preeminent nation in modern history. We owe this title as world's greatest superpower in large part to the twenty-five million men and women who served in our armed services and who defended the principles and ideals of our nation.

From the battlefields of Lexington and Concord, to the beaches of Normandy, and to the deserts of the Persian Gulf, our nation's history is replete with men and women who, during the savagery of battle, were willing to forego their own survival not only to protect the lives of their comrades, but because they believed that peace and freedom was too invaluable a right to be vanquished. Americans should never forget our veterans who served our nation with such dedication and patriotism.

Again, Mr. President, I applaud Chairman BOND and Senator MIKULSKI for recognizing the shortcomings in this VA-HUD Appropriations bill by increasing veterans' health care by an additional \$1.7 billion. Senator WELLSTONE and I believe that we can go even further, and we ask for the Senate's support. We have an obligation to provide decent, affordable, health care for America's veterans. We should live up to our obligation to our nation's veterans and ensure that they are treated with the respect and honor that they so richly deserve.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I say to my colleague from Missouri, we are now working through some colloquies. Some are a little bit more chatty and we have not had a chance to review them all. We will be prepared tomorrow to present them to the Senate.

Mr. President, I say to my colleague from Missouri, we have concluded our actions for today.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed

to a period for morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

THE COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN TREATY

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, two years ago today, on September 23, 1997, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty was read for the first time and referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Unfortunately, instead of coming to the Senate floor to commend the Senate for ratifying the CTBT or for taking steps toward that end, I must come to point out the Senate has done absolutely nothing on CTBT. Not a hearing, not a vote. And I must confess up front, I do this with a sense of confusion, disappointment, and profound regret over the Republican majority's inaction on this important treaty since its submission to the Senate.

The Republican majority's unwillingness to permit the Senate to take even a single step forward on a treaty to ban all nuclear testing has me and many observers confused for a variety of reasons. First, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty has been enthusiastically and unequivocally endorsed by our senior military leaders, both current and former. In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, General Hugh Shelton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated "the Joint Chiefs of Staff support ratification of this treaty." The current chairman and fellow service chiefs are not alone in their support for CTBT. In fact, the four previous occupants of the chairman's seat have endorsed this treaty. Former Chairmen General John Shalikashvili, General Colin Powell, Admiral William Crowe, and General David Jones issued a statement on the treaty and the additional safeguards proposed by the President. Their statement concluded "with these safeguards, we support Senate approval of the CTB treaty."

Second, several Presidents, both Republican and Democratic, have supported a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing. In fact, Presidents as far back as President Eisenhower have worked to make this prohibition a reality. On May 29, 1961, President Eisenhower said the failure to achieve a test ban "would have to be classed as the greatest disappointment of any administration, of any decade, of any party." Similar statements have been made by Presidents in every subsequent decade. And if this Congress fails to act, Presidents in the next millennium unfortunately will be uttering comparable remarks.

Third, the overwhelming majority of the American people, approximately 82 percent, have indicated they endorse immediate Senate approval of the

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Although opponents of the treaty argue support is limited to just Democrats or liberals, opinion polls point to a different conclusion. CTBT support spans the entire political spectrum. For example, among those who identify themselves as Republicans, 80 percent support the treaty and 79 percent of those who characterize themselves as "conservative Republicans" believe the Senate should ratify the CTBT. As far as geographic limitations, the polls show CTBT support knows no boundaries. From coast to coast and all points in between, the vast majority of Americans support this treaty. Let me provide the Senate with a few examples that back up this statement. In Tennessee, 78 percent support the treaty. In Kansas, 79 percent. In Washington, 82 percent. In Oregon, 83 percent. The story is similar in every other state in the Union.

With these facts as a backdrop, I think it is easy to understand why I and many others are confused that, in the two years since the President submitted the CTBT treaty, the Republicans have chosen to do nothing. CTBT is vigorously endorsed by our most senior military leaders, past and present. Senate Republicans are unmoved. Republican and Democratic Presidents since Eisenhower have strongly backed the CTBT. Yet, Senate Republicans choose to do nothing. Finally, over 80 percent of our constituents, from all parts of the political spectrum and all regions of the country, have asked us to ratify the CTBT. And the response of Senate Republicans? Not a hearing, not a vote. Nothing but silence and inaction.

I mentioned at the outset that I am also disappointed by the course Senate Republicans have pursued. The reason for my disappointment is that Senate Republicans have permitted a small number of members from within their ranks to manipulate Senate rules and procedures to prevent the Senate from acting on the CTBT. I recognize these few members are well within their rights as Senators to use the rules in this manner. Under Senate rules, a small group can thwart or delay action on even the most vital pieces of legislation. This has been proven time and again since the Senate's founding. In more recent times, we have seen the same handful of Senators on the far right of the political spectrum repeatedly resort to these tactics to prevent the Senate from acting expeditiously on arms control treaties.

However, in many of these previous instances, a number of Republicans eventually decided to call an end to the political gamesmanship of their more conservative colleagues. They decided that this nation's national interests superseded the political interests of a few Senators at the far end of the political spectrum. They decided that the

full Senate should be allowed to work its will on matters of national security. In short, they decided that politics stopped at the water's edge. I am disappointed that in this particular instance, two years have elapsed and I see no such movement within the Republican caucus. Two years is too long. I would hope we would soon see some leadership on the Republican side of the aisle to break the current impasse and allow the full Senate to act on the CTBT.

Finally, I also indicated I deeply regret the Senate's failure to act. While waiting for the United States Senate to ratify the CTBT, we have seen nearly 40 other nations do so. We have witnessed two additional countries test nuclear weapons while the intelligence community tells us several others continue developing such weapons. And in a few short weeks, we will observe the nations that have ratified the treaty convene a conference to discuss how to facilitate the treaty's entry into force—a conference that limits participation only to those nations that have ratified the treaty. If the United States is to play a leadership role on nuclear testing, convince others to forgo nuclear testing, and actively participate in efforts to implement the treaty, the United States Senate must exercise some leadership itself and give the CTBT a fair hearing and a vote. That effort must begin today.

RISK MANAGEMENT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY ACT

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, we have all spent considerable time during the past few years analyzing the problems in agriculture and making predictions about the future. Some of these problems can be traced back to various sources such as an intrusive Federal Government, drought and instability in foreign markets. As markets closed due to the financial instability, the Asian economic crisis spread, supply increased and farmers had no place to sell overseas. As a result, commodity prices across the board have been well under costs of production. We have all heard from producers in our states, and the message we hear is that our farmers are needing help.

Before the August recess, the Senate passed a \$7.2 billion emergency spending package designed to help offset some of the losses in recent years. Those in the Senate who represent Ag states realize we cannot pass emergency spending bills every time the Ag economy takes a nose dive. This is not fiscally responsible and is not sound public policy. Our farmers deserve better and the representatives in the Congress must look for ways to ensure the people in rural America reap the benefits of the economic prosperity we are experiencing.

Over the August recess, I held many town hall meetings across the state of

Oklahoma. In one meeting in the small farming community of Boise City, I had an audience of six farmers. For over an hour, I was able to talk to the folks who had seen the face of agriculture go through substantial changes over the past 10 years. I was able to hear these farmers voice their concerns about what was working, what wasn't and what could be improved.

What really impressed me Mr. President, was the fact that these producers believed Freedom to Farm was the right thing to do for agriculture. They liked having the freedom to plant what they wanted, the freedom to experiment and try something new without government interference. One of the farmers, Mr. Ron Overstreet, decided to try a couple of new things. In an area we would not normally think of as dairy country or an area for growing grapes, Ron and some of his partners have opened a dairy operation, as well as starting a vineyard. As I heard during the meeting, "If I am not willing to experiment and try something new, I am in the wrong business." I was pleased these farmers did not want to turn their backs on Freedom to Farm but rather work to improve and refine some of the provisions of the program.

At the end of August, Congressman FRANK LUCAS, who represents all of Western Oklahoma, and I held an Agriculture Summit in which we invited individuals representing different commodity groups, Ag lending companies, farm & ranch organizations, as well as Ag economists to discuss solutions to the sustained downturn in the agriculture economy. Many saw several positive changes which could be made to Freedom to Farm, with very few advocating getting rid of the existing farm program. As several of the representatives at the Ag summit suggested, the Federal Government must be more aggressive in opening and competing in foreign markets. We must make opening and penetrating foreign markets a top priority of our Nation's Ag policy. Nearly 1/2 of all U.S. crops are grown for the export market. In 1996, farm exports reached nearly \$61 billion, with nearly 46% of that total going to Asian markets. Due to the economic turmoil, exports to Asia are now less than 39%. While economies in Asia are recovering, relief for our farmers cannot come soon enough. This Administration has been lax in its fundamental duty to aggressively pursue foreign markets for American farmers. To do this, we must change attitudes. When the U.S. uses food as a diplomatic weapon with presidential embargoes, it deprives farmers of the freedom to sell their products. These unilateral sanctions hurt only a small percentage of America's populations. Unfortunately, that group is our farmers. But a simple reform introduced by Senator ASHCROFT, myself and others would work to change this.