

American public. We should spend our resources, our surplus on things that we think are good for people rather than people voicing their opinion.

Then I started to think of the real overriding question, which is: Surplus? What are we all talking about? A surplus? There is \$5.7 trillion worth of debt. There is no surplus. There may be an excess cash to expenditures. But, clearly, there is no surplus.

But if we keep doing these things and paying money in all kinds of different accounts and different proposals, we will never balance the budget, and no American taxpayer will get any relief.

We sent money to Russia recently, I can remember, through the IMF, and nobody can account for the hundreds of millions of dollars that are residing in the bank accounts all over the world. The Russians never got helped by our cash. It went into the pockets of people who purloined the money and took it for their own use.

We keep saying to ourselves, well, we will do better next time. We will put some oversight panels together. We will look at the money and the expenditures. Yet, each time, we fall into the trap once again of saying we better add some more money to the appropriations bill because we have got to help out another one of our neighbors in trouble, a neighbor overseas.

Then I think when I ride around at night, how many homeless Vietnam veterans are probably on the streets of our Nation's capital, homeless Vietnam veterans who are going without health care, medical care of any kind because we cannot help them. They fought the good fight, but we have got too many other things on our plate.

We cannot sacrifice individual appropriations bills, because we are all trying to protect our reelections. We cannot make our government more fiscally sound because we are too interested in racking up totals that are mind boggling on their face.

Our interest payments are like \$247 billion a year on the debt we have now at \$5.7 trillion. So we will never get ahead if we continue this. But what about giving or, as the headline says, forgiving our debts. What about forgiving some of the debts that the American public has every day that they work and pay their taxes to help support this government, and we seem tone deaf to be able to turn our responsibilities directed towards them.

I say, pay down the debt. But I also say let us not start attacking the majority party here for being cheap as I heard last week. We did not recognize our responsibilities. So let us focus a little bit more on the American public, the American taxpayer, helping our own citizens, our community before we start giving money away abroad.

GOOD NEWS TONIGHT: BUDGET BALANCE WITHOUT TOUCHING SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COOKSEY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, Will Rogers used to say, "All I know is what I read in the newspapers." There was another commentator who used to start his news cast every night by saying, "This is good news tonight."

Mr. Speaker, there is good news tonight, perhaps the best news that we have had on the economy and the budget in a long, long time. There it is on page A18 of the New York Times. In fact, it appeared in newspapers all over the country today.

Let me read the first two paragraphs. "Something symbolically enormous may have happened today: the Congressional Budget Office announced that the Government may have balanced the budget in fiscal year 1999", that is the one we just finished, "without spending Social Security money.

"If so, it would be the first time that has happened since 1960, when Dwight Eisenhower was President, gentlemen sported felt fedoras and women wore fox stoles."

Mr. Speaker, this is truly great news. It is great news for all generations. What this really means, it means a more secure retirement for our parents. It means a much stronger economy for baby boomers and folks who are working. But, most importantly, it means a brighter future for our kids.

This is just a blow up of that article that appears in the New York Times, but it is written all over. It is a great story.

I want to come back to something and show my colleagues where we were just a few years ago. Because I think to understand the importance and the significance of this, we sort of have to look at where we were.

This is what the Congressional Budget Office was predicting just a few years ago with what was going to be happening in terms of the Social Security deficit projections. We were looking, in 1999, at a deficit of \$90 billion. We were going in the wrong direction. So the American people said enough is enough. We have got to change course.

So what we did is we began to gradually reduce the growth in Federal spending. We have cut the rate of growth in Federal spending by more than half. As a result, today, we not only have a balanced budget ahead of schedule, but we believe, for the first time since Dwight Eisenhower was President, we actually have a balanced budget without stealing from Social Security.

Now that we have crossed this Rubicon, I think we have to make it clear that we are not going to turn back. If

we are going to do that, I think we have really only several alternatives. One thing, of course, we can always do is raise taxes. There are more than enough of our friends on the left who believe that that is really the answer in terms of balancing our budget long-term.

The second, of course, is we could turn our backs on Social Security. We can begin to steal from Social Security again. We believe that is the wrong course.

The only other real alternative we have in terms of balancing the budget and saving Social Security would be to cut spending.

Now, in the next couple of days, we are probably going to be faced with that simple choice: Are we going to raise taxes? Are we going to steal from Social Security? Are we going to cut spending?

I happen to believe that the third option is the only one that the American people will accept. I also happen to believe that the fairest way to cut that spending would be across the board.

Our leadership and people on the Committee on Appropriations are working on a plan whereby we would cut spending 1 percent across the board. I think that is the fairest thing to do. I think that is what the American people want us to do.

As I say, after wandering in the wilderness of deficit spending, of enormous deficits, including borrowing from Social Security for 40 years, we have finally crossed the River Jordan. Now that we have, we have it within our power to make certain and make it clear to future generations that we are not going back.

HATE CRIMES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, 1 year ago, a mother in Wyoming received news that tragically changed her life forever. Her son, an openly gay University of Wyoming student, was kidnapped, robbed, beaten, and burned by two male assailants. Left exposed to the elements, latched to a ranch fence for 18 hours, the young man Matthew Shepard died at a local hospital 6 days later. He lost his life as a result of bigotry and hate.

One year later, we stand on the House floor empty handed, unable to provide any real comfort to the mothers and fathers of the Matthew Shapards of our Nation. One year later, we stand on the House floor to mourn the death of Matthew, yet, failed to honor his life in any meaningful way. One year later, we are working to ensure that the Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 1999 becomes the law of the land, yet a real threat exists that we may not succeed.