

ways. I think the best way to address it would be to fold in some type of prescription drug coverage in the Medicare program. I hoped that that could be achieved.

In the alternative, in the event that questions about the financing of that would prove too tough to deal with, we could address pricing differentials, because it is very clear that right now the drug companies are selling below cost to their favorite customers, like the HMOs or Federal agencies, and coming back and having people paying these prescription drugs out of pocket.

Our seniors on fixed incomes so often need these prescription medications for their very health maintenance, and unfortunately, this is going to be a Congress leaving town without having done one thing relative to prescription drug needs of our seniors. I just think that is what has become another in a long string of failures.

□ 1530

We are heading into an election year. We had a chance to address campaign finance reform. No campaign finance reform coming out of this Congress. Another in a long litany of failures.

In addition, one of the things that I had hoped we could really achieve, especially in this situation, would be to strengthen the Social Security Trust Fund, extend the life of its solvency. Move now to address the needs of baby boomers in retirement. We had the plan. We had the opportunity. Unfortunately, not one hour on the floor of this House has a measure been discussed to lengthen the life of the Social Security trust fund.

We did see, I will say with Social Security, I think, some very clever sleight-of-hand by the majority. They tried to deflect the discussion from the Social Security Trust Fund and its long-term solvency to whether or not funds from the Social Security revenues were being spent on the funding of government. All of their argument did not have anything to do with strengthening Social Security. None of their arguments go to lengthen the life of the trust fund so much as one day. But they drove the point: The Democrats were going to raid Social Security for wild spending programs, and they were going to put a stop to it.

Mr. Speaker, we know the score, and I have got the score revealed here on this chart. This is from the Congressional Budget Office. About \$14 billion in general fund surplus to support additional spending. And now we know that even as the deal is being put together on the final spending of this Congress, we are going to be into the Social Security program at least \$17 billion and, quite potentially, much larger than that. So although they did not lengthen the life of the trust fund one day, they spoke a lot about not spending any of the Social Security surplus. The

Congressional Budget Office makes it very clear, Social Security money is being spent under their budget plan.

I think, in total this constitutes really an abysmal year in terms of lack of action on the one hand coupled with action that is not helpful on the other hand. I would hope that next year we could put forward a much better record of accomplishment for the American people. Because in the end, I think a congressional session like this should not be about setting up the next election. The elections are about having us work together, putting aside the overheated, overblown campaign rhetoric and getting into the Chamber and rolling up our sleeves, bridging our differences and forcing solutions for the American people. That is what they expect out of Congress.

So perhaps, and I would have to say there is some unlikelihood to this, but even though the 2000 elections are going to be looming large next year, it would be my hope the majority leadership would concentrate on the task at hand and that is doing the people's business. Let the 2000 elections take care of themselves. I yield back to the gentleman.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. I just wanted to say with regard to the remarks that the gentleman from North Dakota made, there is no question that we have to put on the pressure with this Republican Majority when we come back to try to deal with this unfinished agenda.

The one thing I wanted to mention very briefly is that we have already put in place a rule to bring up a discharge petition on the price discrimination and the prescription drug benefit. We have one bill that would basically deal with the price discrimination by putting in place a Federal remedy, and another that would provide for a prescription drug benefit under Medicare. We are going to make sure when we come back that we get the petition signed and that we force that issue to the floor, which we have had to do with every one of these issues, unfortunately. Take that extraordinary means of a discharge petition, which should not be the case, but unfortunately that is what is necessary to get the Republican leadership to move in the House on every one of these issues. HMO reform, campaign finance reform, gun safety, every one that we could mention we have had to go that route.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I would agree with the gentleman. We have had various petitions and, hopefully, there will be another way when we return in January to try to get the prescription drug issue to the floor.

I just want to wrap up my comments with respect to what the gentleman from North Dakota said about Social Security. Let us face it. Next year is going to be a very difficult election year with control of the House, in par-

ticular, up for grabs. I think it will be very difficult to move legislation through. This would have been really the ideal year to take a look at the Social Security issue and shoring it up.

Why? Because we have the time to do it. Because we have a surplus for the first time to be able to take a look at where the monies are spent. And because there are still inequities. Just looking at the 2013 year where we will have the switch over and there will be a deficit fund gathering for Social Security. But there are still inequities in the program that we have, like the notch babies. All of these issues. They do not affect a lot of the population, but they affect people who have been working very hard all of their lives and somehow along the line got something done, a law passed here that was against them for really no reason.

We really need to take a look at this restructure of Social Security, make sure that it is solvent, make sure that we are putting the monies aside today for tomorrow when we will need them. And it is a shame that this Congress was unable or unwilling, that the leadership in this House, the Republican leadership, was unwilling to address the Social Security reform issue.

Mr. Speaker, with that I yield back to the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentlewoman from California bringing that up, because I guess we can take some solace in the fact that at least we stopped this tax break for the wealthy and for the corporate interests. Because if that had passed and the President had signed it, then there would not even be the money available in the surplus as it grows over the next few years to even address the Social Security and the Medicare prescription drug issue. So I guess we have to kind of be happy for small victories, so to speak. At least that did not happen. I agree completely.

The President started out the year in his State of the Union address last year saying he wanted 1999 to be the year when we addressed the solvency of Social Security and Medicare. Basically, the Republican leadership made that impossible, but we just have to try and work harder next year. We are going to be down here on the floor every day in January and February making the point that these issues, this unfinished agenda, have to be addressed.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate had passed without amendment a joint resolution of the House of the following title:

H.J. Res. 80. Joint resolution making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2000, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that pursuant to Public Law 105-277, the

Chair, on behalf of the majority leader, announces the appointment of Deborah C. Ball, of Georgia, to serve as a member of the Parents Advisory Council on Youth Drug Abuse for a three-year term.

ISSUES, NOT SOLUTIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. NUSSLE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, I must say that I had originally requested only 5 minutes, but a number of things have happened in the last several hours that have forced me to come back and request more time to address the issues that I wanted to bring to the attention of the body today.

Certainly, some of the things that have been discussed by previous speakers here lead me to take the floor today and to do so for at least some more time than 5 minutes.

When I was in high school, our class used to have the task at the end of the year of coming up with a motto, among other things, to attach to ourselves for the rest of eternity and it would always be placed in the little book, the annual. It would say the class motto was such and such for this. Mr. Speaker, I have a suggestion after listening to the discussion for the last hour. I have a suggestion of what our colleagues on the other side of the aisle might use for their class motto this session, and it would be this: "Issues, not solutions."

Mr. Speaker, let me just suggest that as the class motto for the Democrats of the 106th Congress. That their real purpose is to have an issue to run on and to avoid the possibility of achieving a solution in this body at all costs.

Now, I say that recognizing that it is certainly not a revelation. I bring to the body that this is the strategy that the Democrats are employing. I say that because the minority leader has said that. The gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT) has indicated in articles that I have read, and certainly have been brought to the attention on the floor in the past, that it is his purpose to try and present as many obstacles as he possibly can to the accomplishment of the goals established by the majority in the area of education reform, in the area of tax reform, in any area important to the people of the country, there they would be.

It is not surprising, therefore, when we look at the majority responsibility of the Congress, that is the passage of 13 appropriations bills, that when we look at how that eventually got done, it got done without the help of our Members on the other side. Without the help of any of them. Maybe three or four at a time would come on board, but almost always it was the Repub-

licans in the Congress that had to carry the load because everybody over there was going to play hard ball because they want issues, not solutions.

The last thing they want, in fact, is a solution to the problem. So much rhetoric has been devoted to the Social Security issue. I am so glad to hear that at least there is a concern on the other side with regard to Social Security and, in fact, holding it sacrosanct, because that is a very interesting thing. We, in fact, passed a law, passed a bill out of this House. It went over to the other side and that law was designed to, in fact, codify this idea of holding Social Security sacrosanct. Not using it for the general fund. Something that we even hear the President saying that he agrees to.

But what has happened, Mr. Speaker, I ask? Where is that bill? And why is it not now part of the solution to the Social Security issue?

Well, of course, it is because the Senate Democrats have had a filibuster. The issue has been brought forward five times at least in the Senate, and each time it has been filibustered by the Democrats and essentially killed.

So where is the desire for the solution here? It is not their desire. It is, in fact, to maintain an issue to go into the next campaign with.

Beyond that, when the discussion resolves to the next stage, and that is the fix for Social Security, where is the President's plan for that? Has anyone heard of the President's plan? I certainly have not. I recognize fully well that the continuation of the Social Security system is in great, great jeopardy; and we must do something to change that. And I do not even suggest for a moment that not spending Social Security funds for general fund purposes will solve the Social Security problem. It will not. It does, in fact, however, slow the growth of government quite dramatically and makes us a little more honest to our constituents. Those two things are pretty good things in and of themselves.

But if, in fact, there is such a desire to fix Social Security, then of course we should hear something out of the White House about how we should go about doing that. That would be nice. That would be good. But we have not. Why have we not heard that, Mr. Speaker? Let me suggest the reason is because it does not fit the motto. The motto is, remember: "Issues, not solutions."

COLUMBINE HIGH SCHOOL AND GUN CONTROL

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, let me go on to the purpose of my original request for this time to speak. It is my understanding that today a group of Members of this body held a press conference in which they unveiled a clock of sorts. And this clock, I am told, has recorded the amount of time, minutes and hours and days, since the event at Columbine High School. And it is

meant, I suppose, well, I know it is meant as a political gag in order to try and embarrass the Congress for not having, quote, moved ahead on gun legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I can understand the desire on the part of a lot of people, especially as we move to the very end of the session, to grasp at straws to do the most outrageous things in order to try to get the attention of the general public and in order to try and score some sort of political advantage.

□ 1545

But I must say, Mr. Speaker, as the Representative from Columbine, from that area, the school is half a mile from my home, and my neighbors have children there, and we suffered through this event together.

I must tell my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, that to have this kind of political shenanigan pulled at this late date to try and remind us of when Columbine occurred, let me tell my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, there is not a parent in my district, there is not a parent of a single child who was murdered at that school or injured in that school who needs to be reminded of when that happened.

There is not a single living soul in my district that needs to be told when that occurred, how long ago, because it is etched indelibly in our memories and in my mind.

To suggest that any action taken subsequent to that time by this Congress could possibly have changed the situation there is, of course, both ludicrous and hypocritical. It is especially hypocritical, Mr. Speaker, because of course this Congress did attempt to address the issue of gun safety.

There was a bill, Mr. Speaker. There was a bill. It made it to the floor. H.R. 2122. Now, maybe it was not a perfect piece of legislation. There were certainly things about it that I had concerns about. But let me just go it just to remind all of us what exactly it was that we were talking about in that particular piece of legislation.

Under current law, background checks are not conducted at gun shows concerning transactions by private vendors but, instead, are only required of Federal licensees. This allows for a loophole of sorts in the acquisition of firearms.

There was an amendment proposed as a matter of fact by a Democrat, by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL). That amendment I believe was the most accommodating option, both in keeping guns out of the hands of the criminals and in protecting the rights of gun owners across the country. Certainly it was controversial. There were many people in my own district, certainly people in my own constituency that said it still went too far. As a matter of fact, I was the only Member in my delegation to vote for this. It