

SENATE—Thursday, April 15, 1999

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. This morning's prayer will be delivered by our guest Chaplain, Hiram H. Haywood, Jr.

We are glad to have you with us.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain, Rev. Hiram H. Haywood, Jr., Archdiocese of Washington, Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, DC, offered the following prayer:

Lord our God, Almighty King, Most Gracious Father, we offer You our humble thanks for Your past blessings. We offer You all praise, all honor, and all glory.

Heavenly Father, we humbly ask that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of Your favor and glad to do Your will. Lord, please bless this great land of ours with honorable endeavor, sound learning, and pure manners.

Almighty and ever living God, may You infuse the women and men of this august body, the Senate of the United States of America, with the wisdom to discern Your will and the courage and fortitude to implement it. Grant them the tenacity, at all times and in every place, to stand steadfast in Your faith. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able acting majority leader is recognized.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I thank the Chair.

SCHEDULE

Mr. CRAPO. This morning the Senate will immediately begin the final 5 hours of debate on the budget resolution conference report. Therefore, Senators can expect a rollcall vote on adoption of the conference report at approximately 2 p.m. or earlier if time is yielded back. Under a previous order, the Senate may also expect a final vote on the House version of S. 767, the uniformed services tax filing fairness bill. That vote is expected to occur immediately following the vote on the budget conference report.

I thank my colleagues for their attention, Mr. President. I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAPO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2000—CONFERENCE REPORT

The Senate resumed consideration of the conference report.

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the budget that is before the Senate. I am sorry that our dear chairman, Senator DOMENICI, is not here, but I want to say some very strong, positive things about this budget, and I wish he were here to hear it. I want to say it mostly because it is true. It would just be a plus if he were here to hear it.

It has been my great privilege since I first came to Congress to be actively involved in budget debates. In fact, I remember the first debate I ever was involved in as a Member of the House was a debate about raising the debt ceiling, and I remember as if it were yesterday the House majority leader, Congressman Wright from Texas, stood up and said that we had no choice except to raise the debt ceiling of the Government, that we were in a position that a man would be in if his wife went out and ran up all these debts on the credit card and the debt collector was at the door.

Today, in this era of political correctness, no one would ever suggest such a thing. They would say their spouses ran up these bills, and probably the reality would be the man did run up the bills in any case. But the point is that the then-majority leader of the House, in 1979, made the point that these bills had been run up and the bill collector was at the door, and so we didn't have any choice except to pay the bills as any good, honest family would.

And so I stand up and say that the first thing I ever said in debate in the Chamber of the House was, well, it is not really the way it works. It is true that honest families would pay their bills, but what they would do is they would sit down at the kitchen table, they would talk about how they got in this financial mess, they would get out the credit card, they would get out the butcher knife, they would cut up the credit card, they would get an envelope and pencil and they would work out a new budget on the back of an old used

envelope, and they would start over again. The problem in Congress was we kept simply spending money, incurring debt, raising the debt ceiling, and nobody ever sat down around the kitchen table, nobody ever got out the butcher knife and cut up the credit cards, and so, as a result, we never changed anything.

So anyway, I opposed raising the debt ceiling. It failed. And then we tried to offer an amendment trying to tie the debt ceiling to the budget and saying you can only raise the debt ceiling if you balance the budget.

Well, to make a long story short, from that time in 1979 until today, I have been involved in debate about every budget that has passed in this Congress or been enforced in this Government since 1979. And let me say that of all those budgets, this is the best budget that has ever been written by American Government in that period.

Now it is probably not, certainly not the most profound budget. The most profound budget was the Reagan budget that was written in 1981. But in terms of what you want a budget to be, it would be very hard to improve on what this budget does. And it is one of my frustrations that everything is now so focused on the war in Kosovo and on many other issues, and we are not having any kind of adequate debate or focus of attention on the profound nature of the budget that is in front of us and what great promise this budget holds for America if we actually enforce this budget.

So let me begin by just ticking off some things this budget does, and then I want to get into a discussion of a comparison of this budget with what the President proposed. I want to get into some of these areas like Social Security and Medicare that have been talked about a lot and will be talked about again. But let me outline what this budget does.

First of all, this is a 10-year budget that, if enforced, will balance the budget every single year for 10 years. To sort of turn on its head the language of the 1980s, this is a budget that has surpluses as far as the eye can see. And it has those surpluses because it maintains a restriction on spending in a period where revenues are gushing into the Federal Treasury, a period where if we are not very careful we are going to see the launching of a massive new spending spree which could squander the surpluses of today that give us the opportunity to pay down debt, to rebuild Social Security, and do it right this time by basing it on wealth instead of debt, that give us the ability