

of Senator DURBIN, or his designee; the second 30 minutes under the control of Senator THOMAS, or his designee.

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

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Further, I ask consent that following morning business, the Senate then resume consideration of S. 1287, the nuclear waste disposal bill.

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

PROGRAM

Mr. MURKOWSKI. For the information of all Senators, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 11:30 a.m. Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1287, the nuclear waste disposal bill. As a reminder, second-degree amendments must be filed by 12:00 noon to the pending substitute amendment. Negotiations regarding the number of amendments and debate time on the nuclear waste bill are still underway. However, amendments are expected to be offered during tomorrow's session. Therefore, Senators can expect votes throughout the day. Senators who have amendments should work with the bill managers on a time to offer their amendments.

ORDER FOR FILING OF AMENDMENTS

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Now I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding adjournment, Senators have until 6 o'clock p.m. today to file first-degree amendments.

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

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. MURKOWSKI. If there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask that the Senate stand in adjournment under the previous order following the remarks of Senator MURRAY.

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

THE PRESIDENT'S EDUCATION BUDGET

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I have come to the floor today to talk about the budget the President has presented to Congress this year. Every budget is a statement of priorities, and I wanted to share with my colleagues how this budget matches up with the priorities of the people I represent. I will spend a moment talking about how we should consider budgets in this remarkable period of economic strength.

The President's FY 2001 budget comes at a time of great prosperity and also great challenges. I take the budget

decisions we will make this year very seriously. We have an historic opportunity to meet our long-term commitments and make vital investments. In looking at the budget, I am focused on two priorities.

First, we cannot squander the surplus. It has been too hard to reach this point of progress. When I came to the Senate in 1993, our fiscal house was a mess. But we made the tough, fiscally responsible decisions that have brought us to this point. The surplus is not here by accident. We made very difficult choices, and now is not the time to abandon our steady, responsible approach.

We have a responsibility to use the surplus in ways that will meet our long-term commitments and continue our economic growth. We know that Social Security and Medicare are running out of money. These are promises from one generation to the next. And it would be wrong—fiscally and morally—not to save those programs while we have the chance.

We should also remember that these surplus projections are just that—projections. I worry that some of the projections my Republican colleagues have used are too rosy—in part because they are based on faulty assumptions, and they do not account for any slowing down of our economy. I think we should use the most realistic estimates available.

Second, we have to continue to make the responsible investments that will help our economy grow. We must maintain our investments in areas like education, R&D, infrastructure, criminal justice, agriculture, and defense. We must strengthen Social Security and Medicare. And we must provide targeted tax relief. I am pleased that the President has presented a responsible plan for meeting those objectives.

One important investment is paying down the debt. We are responsible for paying down a major portion of the public debt. A commitment of \$2.5 trillion over ten years—as called for by the President—would make us debt free within 13 years. Mr. President, now is the time to pay down the debt—while the economy is strong.

I know there will be a lot of debate over tax cuts this year. There is room for tax cuts—but they need to be responsible. We should remember that just last year Republicans were pushing an irresponsible, \$790 billion tax cut. I am glad the American people rejected it. And this year, some presidential candidates appear willing to roll the dice on even riskier schemes.

This year we should be on the look out for tax cuts that do not help our country. When looking at tax cuts, I will be asking: Do they contribute to our future and promote our economic growth by investing in workers and education?

I would like to turn to the investments we have to make in education.

When I think of the types of investments that have real returns for America's families—education tops the list. Investing in education pays dividends in boosting our country's productivity and expanding our people's potential. We must continue to invest in education so that every American will have the tools and skills to succeed in the global economy. We know that by reducing class size, investing in teacher quality, and making higher education more accessible, we are improving the prospects for our nation and our people. And I am proud of the many education investments this budget makes.

We must stay on the path of hiring 100,000 fully-qualified teachers to reduce class size. We know that kids learn the basics and have fewer discipline problems in smaller classes. The budget boosts funding to \$1.75 billion, an increase of \$450 million over the current level. That's enough to hire about 49,000 teachers, nearly half-way to our long term goal. So I commend the president's budget for its commitment to reducing class size. By working together over the past two years, we've already made the classroom a better, more productive place for 1.7 million students—and with the President's latest commitment, we can bring the benefits of smaller classes to many more students.

We know that when we reduce the number of students in each classroom—we need more classrooms, so I am pleased the President's budget also follows through on our efforts to boost school construction.

The President's budget also takes great steps forward to improve teacher quality. As I listened to the President's State of the Union Address last month, I was excited to see that efforts to boost teacher quality are finally getting the national attention they deserve.

We need to have a plan to recruit, train and reward great teachers; a plan to help high-poverty school districts attract great teachers through better pay and higher standards; and a plan to reward school districts that make progress in reducing the number of uncertified teachers and teachers teaching outside their subject area. These would all represent great steps forward.

We need to boost hometown teacher recruitment, to help professionals from diverse fields make the transition to the classroom, and to promote professional development for school leaders.

But there is more we should do to boost teacher quality. That's why, last year, I introduced the Quality and Accountability are Best for Children Act—Quality ABCs (S. 1926). After talking with parents, teachers and students, I wrote a bill that will hold educators accountable for their students' progress. It will help keep great teachers in the classroom by offering them