

weakness will lessen the chances of peace in the region.

Let us suppose that this extraordinary long shot works, that all three balls go in their respective holes, and that Israel, Syria, and Lebanon, with American help, make a real peace. There will still be dangers emanating from the Middle East. The weapons of mass destruction now in the arsenals of Iran and Iraq, and the weapons those two states are still developing, present a lethal danger. The Iranian regime seems more rational and more amendable to democratic change than does Saddam's regime in Baghdad, but there won't be true security in the region until Iran and Iraq are free-market democracies and are fully integrated into the family of nations.

Furthermore, looming overall these security challenges is the biggest problem of the Middle East: The lack of water. Water is not a respecter of political boundaries; water shortages can only be solved on a regional basis, and if they are not solved diplomatically these shortages will be a longstanding source of military conflict.

Despite all of these challenges, it is still worthwhile for us to maintain our patience for peace. The peace we are helping build today will have enormous benefits. Perhaps the greatest benefit is that the burden of fear which overhangs the whole region will be lifted. I am thinking of the fear of a mother whose son has been drafted, the fear of a child in a bomb shelter, the fear that large crowds at a market or sports event might attract a terrorist bomb, the fear with which a family fits and adjust their gas masks, the fear of war that keeps investors away, the fear of the unknown alien race that lives in very similar circumstances just 30 miles away.

As many of my colleagues know, the people who deal with these fears are wonderful people. They are our friends, our actual relatives in many cases. For many of us they are our spiritual cousins as well, they are at home in a region many of us call holy, and they have lived with fear for too long. That is why one of our Government's noblest efforts right now is the effort to help the pragmatism, good sense, and good will of the region's leaders bring peace to the Middle East.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BURNS). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. DURBIN. I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business.

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

Mr. DURBIN. Is it my understanding, under the order, we are to be in morning business until 12:30; is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

#### THE BUDGET

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon to address an issue which is paramount now at this moment in time in this congressional session. Each year, we have certain things we have to do before we can go home. The first of those things is to pass a budget resolution.

The President comes to Capitol Hill in January. He gives his State of the Union Address and suggests a legislative agenda, as Presidents have done, I believe, since President Woodrow Wilson. Then, shortly after that speech, the President's wishes are translated into a budget proposal submitted by the President to Congress.

Of course, we have coequal branches of Government. We are very proud of our responsibility. We look at the President's budget as an indicator of where the country might be headed. Then we add our own priorities. We decide, if we agree with the President, that we will go forward with some of his spending plans. If we disagree, we come up with our own proposal. That proposal is known as the budget resolution. It is a resolution passed by the House, passed by the Senate, one we hope we can agree on, but it isn't signed by the President. It is really the Congress' view of how we should spend the money the people of America give us to supervise and maintain.

The budget process is one where Congress has the burden on its shoulders. The President has met his responsibility. Now it is our turn. We usually try to make certain that before April 1 that budget resolution will be enacted so that then we can get to work on the Appropriations Committees.

The budget resolution is like a blueprint. The Appropriations Committees take 13 different appropriations and spell out, in fine detail, what the budget resolution has instructed them to do.

There are large-scheme things we consider and smaller things, as well. On the larger scheme, we want to continue to bring down the deficit that we have faced in this country for so long, and the national debt which we have accumulated. On a smaller scheme basis—certainly not small in terms of importance, but in spending, we consider everything from the Federal prison system, education, the defense of the country, foreign aid—you name it—each of the appropriations bills takes that into account. The first step is the budget resolution.

I am a member of the Budget Committee. I kind of jokingly say that I served a 6-year sentence on the House

Budget Committee, and now I am back in the role of the Senate's Budget Committee serving my time as well. It is not as tough an assignment as that might lead one to believe. We have a wonderful chairman in Senator PETE DOMENICI of New Mexico; we have a great minority spokesman in FRANK LAUTENBERG of New Jersey. But we do have differences of opinion.

It appears this Presidential election year has made the budget process more difficult than ever. I think the majority party, the Republican Party, has a tough job on their hands. They now have a candidate for President, Governor George W. Bush, who has said his vision of America involves a substantial tax cut that goes primarily to the wealthiest people in America. Virtually every Republican Senator and Member of the House has closed ranks and said he or she supports Governor Bush, and that is the cornerstone of the Bush campaign, this large tax cut for upper-income Americans.

It has become difficult to convert the Republican Presidential primary rhetoric into budget realities; in other words, to take the promises from the campaign stump by Governor Bush of a massive tax cut and turn it into a budget reality on Capitol Hill. I think that is why our budget process this week broke down. The Republicans canceled today's hearing to discuss the budget resolution. I am afraid the Republican majority can't quite get it together.

I think they ought to think twice. I hope they do not include in their budget resolution Governor Bush's tax cut because, frankly, it is a tax cut America cannot afford. It is one thing for us to say it is only some \$223 billion. In fact, it is much more over a 5-year period of time. If Leonardo DiCaprio and others will forgive me, we think the U.S. economy is doing very well, sailing along. In this Republican tax scheme, we see \$223 billion up here that might be its cost over the first 5 years, but take a look at this iceberg below, which could sink this ship, the U.S. economy. Once you have played out the cost of the Bush tax scheme, it approximates \$2 trillion; \$2 trillion in an economy that seems to be doing quite well as is.

Take a look last year at what was proposed by the Republicans as part of their tax relief. Over 5 years, it was \$156 billion. Then as it grew over 10 years, it went to \$792 billion. In this year's debate, the Congressional Republican budget plan is over \$200 billion in the first 5 years, and over 10 years, it just mushrooms and explodes in size.

One might say: Well, frankly, I would like to have a tax cut. Wouldn't everybody, an individual, a family, a business? Of course. But we have to ask a harder question. Would we risk endangering the current economic growth in

this country in order to pass a large and expanding tax cut that goes primarily to wealthy people? Would we be in favor of such a tax cut plan as opposed to paying down the national debt, a debt which, frankly, we have to raise tax money for every single day to pay interest? Wouldn't it be better—incidentally, Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan thinks so and I agree with him—to reduce the national debt as opposed to giving tax breaks to wealthy people?

As that debt comes down, we are saying to our children: Here is an America that is strong, a great democracy, a leader in the world, a nation unencumbered by debt that has been accumulated over the last several decades.

President Clinton's plan suggests that our first priority should be bringing down America's national debt before we start talking about massive, risky tax schemes. I think the President is correct because in bringing down that national debt, we invest money in Social Security, meaning that it is stronger longer, and we invest money into Medicare, the health insurance plan for the elderly and disabled in America, a plan which needs our assistance. That, I think, is the responsible course.

As I have gone across my State of Illinois and met not just with my friends on the Democratic side but independent voters and Republican businessmen and businesswomen, they agree. The most conservative, the most disciplined approach is not a massive tax cut but rather bringing down America's national debt so that our children are not burdened with paying interest on that. That is why my friends on the Budget Committee on the Republican side are really having a tough time of it. They are trying to sell something to America it is not buying. This Governor George W. Bush tax cut is one that, frankly, could jeopardize our economic growth, could take money away from reducing our national debt. I think the American people understand that is just not a good thing to do.

The President's proposal is to focus on bringing down that debt—in fact, at three or four times the rate of what has been proposed by the House Republican Budget Committee—and at the same time, the President says, with the surplus, without raiding Social Security, but with the surplus, let's try to deal with some of the priorities of our Nation.

Take a look at our priorities: Save Social Security first; paying down the debt; protecting Medicare. Here is one I found across Illinois that is extremely important to people—providing a prescription drug benefit for elderly people. Medicare doesn't include it. A third of the seniors do quite well and have coverage. Another third have

some coverage. But a third have none at all.

I have met these people. These are men and women who have prescription drug bills of \$200 a month and more, living on fixed incomes. Many of us believe Medicare should include a prescription drug benefit and some of the surplus should be dedicated for that. Sadly, some of the proposals coming from the Republican side provide not a penny for a prescription drug benefit.

Then, from the same surplus, invest in education. I think we all agree and understand America is strong because we have a good educational system and a well-trained and well-educated workforce that can compete in the world in the 21st century. We want to be able to say this, too, can be an American century, and it means investing in education.

What will we put the money into? Well, certainly to upgrade the skills of teachers so they can teach the latest in terms of science and math and the best approaches to learning; in addition, modernizing our schools, and making sure they are safe. We can bring computer technology to our schools for every kid in America. We talk about afterschool programs so kids don't have those idle hours without supervision. They have a chance to stay after school, under supervision, to be tutored if they are falling behind, enrichment courses if they are good students, counseling if they are troubled. Those things are all helpful and move us in the right direction.

President Clinton has suggested that we should reduce class sizes so that in the lower grades, when kids need more attention, we will have fewer kids in the classroom. I think that makes sense. I support the President on that. Those are investments in education with which most American families would agree.

Then we think we can still have some money left for targeted tax cuts, not for the wealthiest people in the country but for working families.

To give some examples, wouldn't it be great in America if working families, in sending their sons and daughters to college, could fully deduct their college education expenses? I think it would. I meet too many families and young people who graduate from college with massive debt. Sparing these young people and their parents this debt is a very worthy goal, indeed. I think the President's proposal of a tax cut for the deductibility of college education expenses is a good one.

Let me share another example. The largest and fastest growing group in America's population are people over the age of 85. People are living longer. As our parents and grandparents live longer, they run into problems. Sometimes they need long-term care, and that can be expensive. Many people don't have insurance to cover it. The

President wants to give a targeted tax cut for working families to pay for this long-term care for that parent or grandparent we love, that is the kind of targeted tax cut that makes sense. It doesn't jeopardize our economic growth. It says let's help the families who are really struggling to get by.

When we take a look at the tax cut that comes from the Republican side of the aisle, we can see that because it is so large, because it explodes in the out-years, it is going to raid the Social Security trust fund. Take a look at this. Congressional Republican plans really could include a Bush tax cut that would raid Social Security to the tune of over \$372 billion over a 5-year period. I thought that was something we all agreed, not too long ago, that we would not do again. We would protect the Social Security trust fund. Yet this Bush tax cut plan endangers that trust fund—another reason I am sure the Republican-controlled Budget Committee is having a tough time getting started.

Take a look at the tax cut. I have said it helps the wealthiest of Americans. Let's show this chart which proves it. When you take a look at the George W. Bush tax cut plan and the people who benefit from it, if you happen to have an income over \$300,000 a year—and you don't have to hold up your hand—you are going to see a tax cut of \$50,000 a year under Governor Bush's tax cut plan.

If you are a family with an income below \$39,000 a year, it comes out to \$249. That is about \$20 a month. That is the Bush tax cut plan—\$249 for working families and \$50,000 for the folks who are making over \$300,000 a year.

So the Republican Presidential candidate would have us jeopardize our economic growth, and would reach into the Social Security trust fund to create a tax cut for the wealthiest people in America of \$50,000 a year.

I have to tell you, quite honestly, if you are making \$300,000 a year, I am sure you can figure out what to do with another \$50,000; but you are probably pretty well off. If you have invested in the stock market during the Clinton-Gore administration, you have probably done pretty well with your investments. I can't understand why George W. Bush is focusing his tax cut on the wealthiest people in America.

Look at the prescription drug benefit plan. We understand what it will cost. We understand under the House Republican budget what they think it will cost for us to have a prescription drug benefit plan. The problem is, in the House Republican budget no money is available for that. Once you have dedicated yourself to the George W. Bush tax cut, you lose the resources to provide for prescription drug benefits for the elderly people in America.

For a moment, let me go back to education because I think this is worth repeating. What we are talking about

under the President's plan is investing money in education. It is no surprise to me that everybody asked in national polls about the top issue facing Government will answer that it is education. That is the No. 1 area that should be funded and the No. 1 area we should pay attention to in Washington and in the State capitals. Now we are talking about making good on the promise to America that we elected officials will help out with education.

Look at the President's plan: increasing education funding by 12 percent; making certain we prepare young children for school by expanding the Head Start Program, one of my favorites; reducing class size and training teachers.

As I go around in my State, I find this is something teachers want to have—help and assistance to make sure they understand the technology, which changes almost on a weekly basis. Building up-to-date schools or modernizing them is part of the President's investment for education plan; money invested in education technology so there is no digital divide, so whether you are in a poor district, wealthy district, rural or urban, you will have the same access to technology. Kids coming out of the classroom will be part of our national workforce and they should all have the needed skills. Other priorities: helping the disabled, promoting afterschool learning, and improving college access and affordability by improving Pell grants, which help lower-income students complete their education, as well as the deductibility of college education expenses.

Let me say that the targeted tax cuts proposed by the Clinton-Gore Administration and the Democrats, as I mentioned before, include helping families care for elderly parents; targeting the surplus so it goes to expanding educational opportunities; providing marriage penalty relief, which both parties support; helping people prepare for retirement with new basic pension plans; and expanding the earned-income tax credit, a benefit we give to a lot of working families who otherwise might not be able to succeed. We want them to succeed.

The basic question we have to ask and answer during this budget debate is whether America is headed in the right direction. You would expect me, on the Democratic side and being proud of the record of the last 7 years in terms of where our economy has come, to say, yes, I think America is moving in the right direction. But as we ask American families across the Nation, they agree; they know the Dow Jones Average, which we follow now on a regular basis, has risen from some 3,000 to over 10,000 in the last 7 years. They understand, as well, that we have been able to see more businesses created across America, particularly businesses owned by women. More people are building and owning homes than ever

in the United States. Inflation is under control. We see reductions in unemployment, reductions in the welfare rolls. We have the smallest welfare rolls in America in 30 years and the lowest overall crime rate in 25 years. There are 20.4 million new jobs under this administration.

Frankly, we are enjoying the first back-to-back budget surpluses in 43 years. Not long ago, we were debating on the floor of the Senate about amending the Constitution, a balanced budget amendment, so Federal courts could force Congress to stop spending into red ink and deficits. Now we are talking about what to do with the surplus. Seven years ago, in the era of spiralling budget deficits, who in the world would have believed we would be talking about budget surpluses today? Amazing. And this has all occurred under the watch of the Clinton-Gore administration. Most of us believe our country is moving in the right direction and we should not launch some untried, unproven, new approach that may jeopardize that economy.

I think the proposal by Gov. George W. Bush for massive, risky tax cuts for wealthy people does just that. You expect to hear that from a Democrat. But go to somebody who might be dispassionate in this debate, Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan. He has basically said it is the wrong thing to do to give a massive tax cut. You could jeopardize this economic growth. We don't want to see that happen.

Is America perfect? No. We don't like the cost of gasoline and heating oil today. We know we can do better in education. We know we can help families pay for some of their basic expenses, take care of their parents and grandparents. So we continue to look for ways to provide that assistance to families. But we do believe we have made great progress over the last 7 years.

Now, the Budget Committee in the Senate has to try to calculate a way to put together a budget resolution, and they are in a dilemma. Are they going to stand by their Presidential candidate, George W. Bush, and support a tax cut that risks the economic progress we have made? Or will they turn their backs on their candidate and say, no, let's keep going on the right course and keep America moving forward?

I understand why they postponed this week's hearing, and I hope they can resolve it in their own caucus. Let's bring this issue to the floor and let every Member of the Senate vote on the George W. Bush massive, risky tax cut scheme. If they want to go on record supporting it, so be it, then they stand by their candidate. But they can step back and explain how we are going to pay for it and why people making over \$300,000 a year need a \$50,000 tax cut. I don't think they will.

I think this country is moving in the right direction. I certainly hope Members of the Senate and the House, perhaps even on a bipartisan basis, will say that continuing this economic progress in America is more important than a ringing endorsement for any Presidential candidate.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be able to speak for 15 minutes as if in morning business.

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

#### THE BUDGET

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, we are on the eve of establishing a budget priority for the budget year 2000, the one that begins in October and to next September.

I am the senior Democrat on the Budget Committee. I would like to establish some parameters about the budget as I see it because we are waiting patiently for the majority to produce a budget resolution, which is a responsibility of the Budget Committee. That is supposed to be done by April 1 of this year. Other than meeting that deadline, the alternative would be for the majority leader to present a budget as he sees it.

The question arises: Why is it, when the target as proposed by the chairman of the Budget Committee is for a budget resolution to be here by March 1—and today is considerably past March 1—we are still waiting?

I was advised yesterday as the senior Democrat on the Budget Committee that we could expect to have a markup yesterday or today. That was called off at a rather late moment last night. We are sitting here, I will not say breathless but certainly curious, about what it is that prevents us from getting a budget.

I have to do my own interpretation because I have not been given any explanation. I know there are competent staff people working to get the budget finished. We have them on both sides—on the Republican as well as on the Democrat side. Why isn't it finished?

Let me tell you why I think it is not and why we on this side of the aisle think it isn't being done. It is because they can't get an agreement between the members of the committee. The tax cut package of George W. Bush, candidate for President of the United States, is something that seems to me