

It makes no sense at all. It makes no sense. It seems to me we should spend that week—instead of debating a budget when we have never seen the President's recommendations—to provide for a stimulus package so that we are dealing with the immediate weakness in the economy and then come back to this longer term plan that the President proposes after we have seen the President's budget.

Mr. BYRD. Madam President, will the Senator yield to me, finally?

Mr. CONRAD. Yes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. BYRD. Would the Senator take the few remaining minutes under my control and sum up the points that have been made here this morning as to the differences between what the Senate was confronted with in 1993 and what we are being confronted with today anent the budget resolution and the budget process? There are several items. Will the Senator sum them up?

Madam President, how much time do I have remaining?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator has 2 minutes remaining.

Mr. BYRD. I thank the Chair.

Mr. CONRAD. Madam President, I would be happy to try to sum up by saying, first of all, the chairman of the Senate Budget Committee told us last week he does not intend to mark up the budget in the Budget Committee. We urge him to reconsider. We urge him to have a public markup in which there is debate, discussion, and votes so that the Budget Committee meets its obligation and responsibility.

No. 2, when talking about 1993—because some have said, well, this is what happened in 1993; that we did not have the budget from the President before we wrote a budget resolution on the floor of the Senate—the differences are quite clear. In 1993, the Senate Budget Committee marked up fully a budget. No. 2, we had a good deal more detail from the President in 1993 in terms of functional totals, in terms of what each of the areas should get or what kind of cuts they could expect.

We do not have that this time. So now, in 2001, we do not have the Budget Committee doing a markup. At least that is what the chairman so far has said. We hope he will reconsider. We do not have the level of detail we had in 1993. So what is about to happen is really quite remarkable. We are going to have the Senate write a budget resolution without ever seeing the President's budget and without the Budget Committee ever doing its job to write a budget and to mark it up.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

Mr. BYRD. I thank the distinguished ranking member of the Senate Budget Committee. I assume that consumes all of the time on this side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROBERTS). The Senator's time has expired.

Under the previous order, the Senator from Wyoming, Mr. THOMAS, or his designee is recognized for 1 hour.

SCHEDULE

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, today the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 12 noon. Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of the campaign finance reform bill, with Senator WELLSTONE to be recognized to offer an amendment. At 2 p.m. the Senate will begin consideration of S.J. Res. 4, a constitutional amendment regarding election contributions and expenditures. Debate will continue for up to 4 hours, with the vote scheduled at 6 p.m. Any votes ordered in relation to the amendments to the campaign finance reform bill will be stacked to follow the 6 p.m. vote this evening.

I thank the Chair.

LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, we have been consumed over the last week, and will be for the remainder of this week, with campaign finance reform, an issue that has been about for some time and has been stressed by a number of Members of the Senate. I have indicated before that, certainly, it is an important issue. However, it is time we complete that issue, as there are many others that probably are of more importance to most people than that of campaign finance reform. Nevertheless, that is the commitment.

It has been an interesting debate. It will continue to be an interesting debate. I am hopeful we will come up with some kind of a proposition when it is over and not have wasted the entire 2 weeks discussing the various aspects of it.

This evening we will hear the introduction of the Hagel proposal, of which I am an original cosponsor. It is an important issue to be debated, one that deals with campaign finance reform more clearly than does the floor bill, which is the McCain-Feingold approach. One has to make a decision as to whether or not they want the Federal Government to be managing elections or whether, under the Constitution, elections should be comprised primarily of freedom of speech and an opportunity for people to participate. In terms of elections, it would be wrong if we found ourselves in a position of seeking to limit the opportunities for people to express themselves.

The Hagel bill, which he will discuss in great detail, deals with the most important aspect of campaign finance reform; that is, disclosure. Whenever dollars are given to a candidate for the purpose of election, they are disclosed, disclosed immediately so voters can then determine for themselves whether they think that is a legitimate expenditure or not.

The bill also provides for an increase in the level of hard money that goes to candidates. That was set in law in the 1970s. It has not been changed since that time. Obviously, the amount of money represented in the 1970s through inflation is not nearly as expansive as it is today. It changes that. It also puts a limit on soft money.

I am hopeful that when the bill comes forward we will be able to discuss an alternative which I believe is a more reasonable alternative than the one that has been discussed. Then we can move on to some items of dire importance: Obviously, taxes—giving people an opportunity to keep more of their own money. When we find American taxpayers paying more today than they have ever paid in history as a percentage of gross national product, paying more now than they did in World War II, that doesn't seem appropriate. Where should the money go? It should go back to the people who have paid it in.

We will also be discussing the economy, an issue that needs to be talked about immediately. We will be talking about the opportunity of tax relief to assist in strengthening the economy. I am sure we will be talking more clearly about the idea of putting some money back into the economy more immediately, some \$60 billion that is in surplus of this year's needs for the budget and could be placed back into the economy in some method or other.

Those are topics that need to be debated.

We say education is an issue that means more to people than any other individual subject. We ought to be talking about that. We ought to be talking about the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. We ought to be debating whether or not Federal dollars for education ought to be designated in terms of where they go by the Federal Government, or should they be sent to local and State governments to decide for themselves where their needs are.

I am from Wyoming. Certainly, the needs in Chugwater, WY, are different from those in Pittsburgh, PA. We ought to have the opportunity and the flexibility to send those dollars there.

Certainly, we need to be discussing preserving Social Security as we have in the past, making sure those dollars are there. We need to be talking about paying down the debt, which we have an opportunity to do now. We ought to be discussing doing something with health care to provide more availability for people all over the country.

There are many topics we ought to be debating, and hopefully we will be able to move to those. One of them, of course, is energy and the environment. We now find ourselves in a position of facing great difficulty with energy, made more visible and accentuated by the problems existing in California.