

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I do not come to the floor to try to answer all the various arguments made. I would just like to say to the American taxpayers: It ought to be interesting to you, Mr. and Mrs. America who are paying taxes, because, in fact, what is happening here is, instead of the opportunity to give the taxpayers back some of this \$5.6 trillion surplus—a number we cannot hardly understand—instead of putting that right up at the top of the priority list, we are speaking about priorities. But isn't it interesting, every single priority is to spend more of the taxpayers' money. All the priorities that are being stated here are spending a part of this surplus to spend on something for Americans.

The whole difference is that we suggest you put the taxpayer at the top of that list, not at the bottom of the list—at the top of the list—and that instead of using their money for new programs and add-ons, whatever it is, that we ought to consider them first. Included in that is the President's tax plan which is good for the economy.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CONRAD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. I ask unanimous consent for 1 minute.

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

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I say to my colleague, who not only do I respect but for whom I have genuine affection, when he says this is just a question of spending versus tax cut, he knows better. Those are not the choices. They really are not. The choices are tax cuts, spending, and addressing debt.

The real difference between our two plans—the biggest difference—is they have twice as much for tax cuts and we have twice as much for debt reduction. That is the real difference. Yes, we also have some additional spending for prescription drugs, education, agriculture, and a prescription drug benefit because we think those are the priorities of the American people.

But let there be no doubt, the fundamental difference between us is we are for more debt reduction; they are for more of a tax cut. That is where it lies.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 12:30 having arrived, the Senate will stand in recess until the hour of 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, at 12:32 p.m., the Senate recessed until 2:15 p.m., and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. INHOFE).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET FOR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FOR FISCAL YEARS 2001—2011—Continued

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I yield myself 10 minutes off the resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 172

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise in strong support of the Baucus-Graham amendment. This amendment reserves \$311 billion for a Medicare prescription drug benefit that will be reliable for seniors, affordable for the taxpayers, and will be undeniable when it comes to being able to buy a prescription drug. It will put us on a road to a benefit that meets patient needs, can be sustained by our U.S. Government, and yet is affordable with seniors.

Honor your father and mother is not only a good commandment by which to live, but it is a very good policy by which to govern. We believe we ought to put it in the Federal law books. We should honor our fathers and our mothers by adopting the Baucus-Graham amendment to create a prescription drug benefit that does mean something for America's seniors.

Regrettably, the Bush plan is rather spartan and skimpy. It includes only \$153 billion for a prescription drug benefit. That seems to be a lot of money, and it is, but when one estimates what it would take to provide a real prescription drug benefit, the cost is much more. That comes from reliable experts in the field.

First of all, I am concerned about how the President's plan would work. It would provide block grants to States to develop programs, but these programs would only be for the very low-income seniors, despite the fact that half of the seniors who need help are in the middle-income bracket.

What do I mean by low income? I mean \$11,000 a year or less. If you are a senior and you have an income of \$11,000 or less, you might be eligible for President Bush's plan. However, as we have all gone throughout our communities, what is one of the issues we hear the most? We need a prescription drug benefit, say the seniors.

The "sandwich" generation is caught in the middle of providing tuition for their children's education and looking out for their moms and dads. They are saving for their own retirement, helping mom and dad pay for their prescription drugs, and trying to afford the rising costs of college tuition for their children.

The middle class is, once again, caught in the vice. If you are in the middle class, you cannot afford it. If you are very wealthy, you can buy your own prescription drugs. Under the Bush plan, if you are very poor, your Government will help you.

I want to be on the side of all senior citizens, and that is why we are for the Baucus-Graham approach.

Under the Bush plan, coverage will vary—where you live; what kind of plan your State set up. If my colleagues think we have had problems with the Patients' Bill of Rights, wait until we get into the Bush plan on prescription drugs. This means that a senior in Maryland might have generous coverage, but if that senior visits a sister in Virginia, just over the Potomac bridge, they might not have as good of a benefit.

We cannot have a prescription drug benefit for seniors based on the zip code of where they live. We are "one nation under God, indivisible . . ." How about having one Medicare prescription drug program that is also indivisible. President Bush is choosing a lavish tax cut over creating a real Medicare prescription drug benefit.

Let me give you a hypothetical constituent: A 75-year-old widow, on an income of \$20,000 a year, has a stroke. Her prescription drugs will cost about \$4,200 a year. That comes out to \$350 a month. The Democratic drug benefit would save her her about \$150 a month or \$1,700 a year. Remember, under Graham-Baucus, the Democratic plan would save her \$1,700. That is almost a \$1,600 difference from what she would get in the Bush tax cut. That is what she could get in a Bush tax cut. Remember, at \$20,000 a year, with a tax break based on income, she would get \$141 a year. I think if you would ask the American people what they want, they would want a prescription drug benefit that would help pay the bills as well as keep the money in the senior's pocketbook.

Another example. An elderly couple with an income of \$30,000 a year. Their combined drug costs, say, are \$6,000 a year. Their daughter is helping pay drug bills, taking money from the kids' college fund. Under the Democratic plan we could save them \$2,000 a year. The Bush tax cut would save them practically nothing.

These examples show that the Democrats have their priorities in order. First, we must make good on the promises we have made to our seniors. Second, we must make sure we balance the books not only today but into tomorrow. The Democratic alternative is making a down payment on that balloon payment that is coming due on Social Security and Medicare. The constituents who have written and called me to ask why they or their parents cannot get the medicines they need do not want to hear about a lavish tax cut. They want to hear about Medicare, about a Medicare prescription drug benefit that will be reliable, affordable, and undeniable.

America is the nation that invented most of the miracle drugs. This was