only remember two or three times where it was really a bipartisan budget resolution. This vote of 65-35 was, I think, a quick vote, a positive vote, and a good step toward completing our work this year on all the different components of this bill. So I congratulate you and thank you for your work.

I say to Senator DASCHLE, would you like to comment on the majority leader's. He has spoken for both of us again in complimenting our chair as well as our ranking member.

This is the first managerial responsibility, under our Budget Committee, that our ranking member has had. I must say, he has made us all proud and very grateful. He has done an extraordinary job. And his staff has been very helpful, as we worked through many of the legislative landmines we faced over the course of the last several days.

I would also like to thank our Democratic whip, Senator REID of Nevada, for the outstanding job he did in helping our ranking member and working through the many challenges we faced. He, as he always does, has been just a tremendous workhorse. Senator REID deserves our thanks and our debt of gratitude as well.

I thank the majority leader for yielding.

Mr. LOTT. In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to join in expressing appreciation for Senator REID. We consider him the utility player for both sides. He does wonderful work. We do appreciate it.

Also, I want to take note that Senator DOMENICI, as chairman of the committee or ranking member, has been involved in every budget resolution we have worked on since the law went into effect back in the 1970s and he has been the manager on our side 14 times.

So we have the old pro here, and we have the new ranking member, and they both did a great job and worked together quite well. We do appreciate it.

With that, I yield the floor.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I say to my good friend, Senator KENT CONRAD, the ranking Democrat on the committee, have done an excellent job. We really appreciate it. It has been long hours. But I watched you working last night and again this morning, and I am sure there are many Senators who would not have believed we would be where we are at this moment—20 minutes to 3—having completed a bipartisan budget resolution.

I am sure many of us would make changes and say it is not perfect, but in the years I have watched votes on budget resolutions—and they now go back over some 25 or 26 years since we first started the budget resolution—I think our committee was one of the first to reach agreement in this power-sharing arrangement. And certainly here on the floor, Senator DOMENICI worked in such a constructive and gracious way. We appreciate it very much.

If I might talk for just a moment, on the reasons I voted in opposition to this budget resolution after these long hours of work, I would sum it up in the following ways.

No. 1, I wanted to do more debt reduction than we ultimately did here. I wanted to reserve $70 billion, in the forecasted surpluses for debt reduction. Unfortunately, we fell well short of that. So my first concern with what we passed is there is not sufficient debt reduction.

My second concern is that after a detailed analysis of all the amendments that have passed, we are into the Medicare trust funds in the years 2002, 2005, 2006, and 2007, to the tune of $54 billion. As I enunciated when I laid down a budget alternative, I do not think we should use any of the trust funds of Social Security or Medicare for any year. So that would be the second reason I voted in opposition.

The third reason was that the tax cut we are left with of $1.2 trillion over the 10 years is simply too large to accommodate the kind of additional debt paydown that I believe is in the best interest of the country. Instead of paying down the publicly held debt to about $500 billion, this budget resolution pays down the publicly held debt to about $1.1 trillion. So I would have liked to have seen us pay down the publicly held debt by another $600 billion.

Finally, Mr. President, in the option that I offered our colleagues, we reserved $800 billion to strengthen Social Security for the long term. This budget will fall far short of that at about $160 billion that is available to strengthen Social Security for the long term.

So for those reasons, I voted in opposition.

In saying that, I do want to indicate that we improved this budget substantially. From what we started with—from what we started with; not from my plan, but from what we started with—we reduced the tax cut, we increased the amount of publicly held debt paydown, and we reserved additional resources for improving education, for a prescription drug benefit, for national defense, and for agriculture.

So those were important improvements. I just would have liked to have seen us do somewhat better. I would...
have liked to have seen us put more of an emphasis on debt reduction. But we will have other opportunities to make those points and other opportunities to vote on those priorities.

I conclude by thanking all of our colleagues for their patience and their graciousness during this period.

I also want to take this moment to thank the staffs who worked so hard during this period because these have been long nights and difficult days.

I want to start with Mary Nayior, my staff director for the Senate Finance Committee, who did a superb job under difficult circumstances; and Jim Horney, who is also a top staffer, the deputy staff director for the Senate Budget Committee; Sue Nelson, who produced chart after chart that showed us where we stood at every juncture so we knew precisely where we were, which I think helped us make wise decisions; Lisa Konwinski, our counsel, who Lisa drafted amendment after amendment for me, my colleagues, and did a superb job; Sarah Kuehl, who has primary responsibility in the Social Security area; Steve Bailey, our tax counsel; Dakota Rudesill, who handles national security issues and national defense; Scott Carlson and Tim Galvin, who handle agriculture for the committee; Shelley Amdur, who is our education specialist; Jim Esquea and Bonnie Galvin; Chad Stone, our economist; Rock Cheung, who helped produce those charts, and I think helped us be more successful than we would have otherwise been; and certainly Karin Kullman, who joined the staff to help us do outreach to groups who were interested in the budget, my fellow, my terrific press team, Stu Nagurka and Steve Posner, who had their hands full.

Goodness knows, I appreciate the work all of you have done. I appreciate very much the long hours you have put in and your dedication. You have made me proud. I think you have helped us improve the budget for our country.

I thank the staff on the other side, especially the staff director for Senator Domenici, Bill Hoagland, who is a class act. He deserves all of our thanks for the professionalism with which he conducts himself.

Mr. President, again, I thank everyone who has made this an interesting and a productive period, and came out with a lot better deal than I imagined we could achieve. I get it done in a quiet, thoughtful, professional way. Robert Hoffman knows how to get bills passed into law. He knows the ins and outs of the legislative process. And, he has the ability to bring sides together to reach consensus and build bipartisan relationships.

While Robert's professionalism and work ethic are second to none, I would be remiss to not mention Robert's strength of character and personal integrity.

He is a gentleman—a kind man, a sincere man, and a man who cares about people. He cares about every single person in my office.

He cares about them on a professional level, and he cares about them on a personal level. He cares about them as people.

Robert Hoffman is a good man, and I am privileged to have had the extraordinary opportunity to work with him and call him my friend.

As he departs Capitol Hill after twelve fruitful, fearless, and fun years, I wish him and his lovely new wife, Andrea, all the best in the world. Thank you, Robert.

Mr. President, those in the Chamber and on Capitol Hill who will miss Robert Hoffman will still be able to see